

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

All sin is a distortion, degradation, or destruction of love. We either love the wrong thing, or we love the right thing in the wrong way. The sins of gluttony and greed consist of loving food and drink and money and material possessions either too much, too little, or in the wrong way.

Under the category of gluttony, we have any undue attachment to physical substances: alcoholism, drug addiction, tobacco addiction are all forms of gluttony as is over-indulgence of food. Gluttony also includes not loving these things appropriately. We are not to despise God's blessings and go to the other extreme of enforced teetotalism, banning certain foods or rejecting what God has given for our health and happiness.

Greed is a similar sin, but applied to money and material possessions. Remember the Bible does not say, "Money is the root of all evil" it says, "the LOVE of money is the root of all evil." Greed is the love of money and material possessions more than the love of God. Remember, greed and gluttony are not necessarily the disgusting excess we associate with those words. It is possible to be a person of refined taste and manners, but still be guilty of gluttony and greed.

The test in these matters is to ask how much control you have. Can you really give up that favorite food or drink or other stimulating substance? If not, it controls you, you do not control it. Likewise, the test of whether you are guilty of greed is whether or not, you can make a really hefty donation of dollars to the Lord's work. Are you able to make a truly sacrificial gift? If not, your money controls you, you do not control your money.

Christian asceticism is the discipline of our appetites so that we achieve balance and stability—loving all things according to their worth. The virtues of self control and generosity, counter the sins of gluttony and greed. This Lent, challenge yourself in the elimination of these sins and the cultivation of these virtues.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker