



Concupiscence, a term rarely heard outside theological circles, is a central concept in Christian tradition. Derived from the Latin *concupiscentia*, meaning “disordered desire,” it may seem distant or abstract. Yet its meaning and relevance are deeply rooted in our daily experience. This article seeks to shed light on what concupiscence is, how it affects our spiritual life, and how we can transform this reality into an opportunity to grow in holiness.

1. What Is Concupiscence?

Concupiscence refers to the disorder of human desires as a consequence of original sin. According to Church teaching, while Baptism erases original sin, the wounds it left in our nature remain. One of these wounds is concupiscence: that inclination to sin that we all experience.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, describes this internal struggle masterfully: “*I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want*” (Rom 7:19). This inner conflict is one of the most evident manifestations of concupiscence, which, although not a sin in itself, predisposes us toward it.

2. St. Thomas Aquinas’ View of Concupiscence

St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest theologians in the history of the Church, explored the concept of concupiscence in depth in his masterpiece, the *Summa Theologica*. For him, concupiscence is an effect of humanity’s fall. According to Thomas, before original sin, man’s passions and desires were perfectly ordered by reason and subordinated to God. However, after the fall, this harmony was broken.

Thomas distinguished between two types of concupiscence: the *concupiscence of the eyes* (the disordered desire for material goods) and the *concupiscence of the flesh* (the disordered desire for sensual pleasures). Both are part of the Christian’s spiritual struggle, but Thomas also saw them as an opportunity to exercise virtue. In his view, God’s grace not only helps us resist concupiscence but also transforms our disordered desires into authentic love for God and neighbor.



3. Concupiscence and Freedom: Can It Be Overcome?

One common misconception is that concupiscence inevitably condemns us to sin. However, Catholic doctrine teaches that, with God's grace, we can resist these disordered inclinations.

Freedom, understood as the capacity to choose good, does not disappear with concupiscence. On the contrary, this inner struggle is an invitation to exercise our freedom virtuously. Every time we choose good in the face of temptation, we strengthen our will and grow in holiness.

4. Concupiscence in Daily Life

Concupiscence manifests in everyday aspects of our lives. Some examples include:

- **The disordered pursuit of pleasure:** From overindulgence in food or drink to addiction to technology, these behaviors reflect a desire to fill a spiritual void with temporary goods.
- **Materialism:** The desire to possess more—whether money, possessions, or status—is often a manifestation of the *concupiscence of the eyes*.
- **Struggles with purity:** In a hypersexualized world, the *concupiscence of the flesh* finds fertile ground, demanding constant effort to live chastely.

These examples show that concupiscence is not an issue exclusive to saints or theologians; it affects each and every one of us.

5. Practical Applications for Overcoming Concupiscence

The Church offers numerous resources to confront and transform this disordered inclination. Here are some concrete steps:

1. **Living a sacramental life:** Confession and the Eucharist are powerful means of receiving God's grace. Confession helps us identify the areas where we fall most often, while the Eucharist strengthens us to resist temptation.
2. **Prayer:** St. Thomas emphasizes that without God's grace, we cannot overcome concupiscence. Daily prayer, especially the Holy Rosary, is a powerful shield against



temptation.

3. **Fasting and mortification:** These practices, often overlooked in the modern world, are essential for ordering our desires and strengthening our will.
4. **Cultivating virtues:** Each virtue plays a role in the fight against concupiscence. Chastity, temperance, generosity, and humility are especially relevant.
5. **Seeking spiritual support:** Spiritual direction and communion with other Christians can provide great support in this struggle.

6. Relevance in Today's World

Today more than ever, concupiscence finds new ways to manifest. Social media, advertising, and a consumerist culture perpetuate a model of life centered on satisfying immediate desires. In the face of this reality, the Christian message stands as a liberating antidote.

In a world that promises happiness through the accumulation of goods or pleasures, the fight against concupiscence reminds us that true freedom and fulfillment are found in living according to God's will. Every act of virtue testifies that we are made for something far greater than the fleeting pleasures of this world.

7. An Opportunity for Holiness

Far from being a condemnation, concupiscence is an opportunity to grow in holiness. As St. Augustine said: *"God would not allow evil if He were not powerful enough to bring a greater good from it."* The struggle against our disordered desires allows us to exercise our will, depend more on divine grace, and orient ourselves toward true love.

Conclusion: From Struggle to Love

Concupiscence reminds us of our fragility but also points us toward the source of our strength: God. Understanding it from St. Thomas' perspective and applying it to our daily lives helps us transform an internal struggle into an opportunity to grow in love and freedom.

The key is not to fear this struggle but to embrace it as a path to holiness. With God's grace,



personal effort, and the means the Church provides, we can overcome disordered inclinations and live the fullness of the life God has given us.