

... and so if we are really listening to the Holy Spirit as our conscience, then

... every gift from God granted us freely by faith is transformed in us into commitment to perfect it in action.

Christian asceticism is the soul's striving to be filled with that perfection found in Christ Jesus, by the grace of His gifts in living a Holy Spirit-filled life. To be filled with God, we must first empty ourselves of all ungodliness. The spiritual discipline of asceticism is the housecleaning of our soul that prepares our heart for the indwelling of the fullness of Christ's perfection. All Christians are called to such perfection, not just "religious." The spiritual and moral discipline of asceticism is necessary to perfect the likeness of Jesus Christ in us and to release the healing, lifegiving gifts of His Holy Spirit into our sick and dying world. Asceticism is a continual striving, because the pushers of the world are always at our door trying their hardest by all means to invade God's rightful space in us and occupy it with their own sources of limited, temporary, and perverted satisfaction. Every day we must be prepared anew to drive these gangs of plunderers, tempters, and con artists from our individual and collective door. Asceticism is the exercise we get defending the borders of our soul and keeping our spiritual house in order as a clean and pleasant dwelling place for our God Who Is Love.

Ascetic discipline is not undertaken to earn salvation. Rather, Christians seek perfection only out of love, in order to become more pleasing to their Lord who loves them. There is no selfish or oppressive motive, and no mundane desire for power and control in pure mature Christian asceticism. Saints are not proud of their ascetic accomplishment. Love of God, and desire to conform to His goodness in all things is the motivation for everything committed in or omitted from a Christian ascetic's life.

Asceticism orders the internal life and external activity of persons according to the will of God, who exists as a Trinity of Divine Persons eternally related in holy love. Because there is this communion of love within the interiority of the Trinitarian Godhead, God's creative expression in the world has made us to be creatures of his loving community here as well. Ecology is concerned with the restoration of Edenic life-giving relationship within the earthly community of creation. The fundamental nature of sin is that it destroys right relationship in the community of God's love. The disorder of sin in the human microcosm expresses itself in the malevolent disorder of societies and the macro-disordering of the ecosystem. Personal sin, as offense to the Creator God Who Is Love, cannot be isolated from social and environmental consequences.