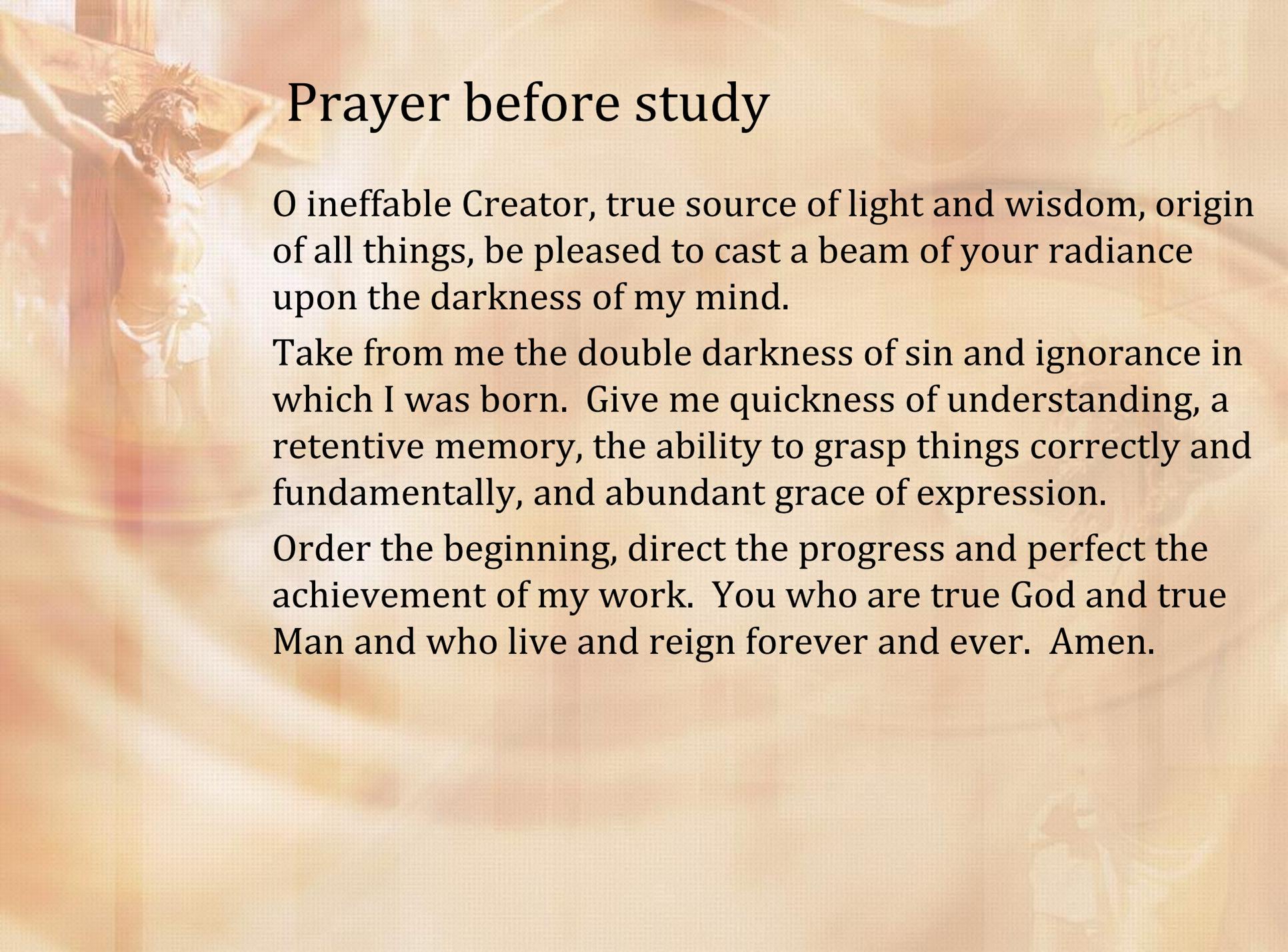


# The Seven Deadly Sins

And the Virtues of Life

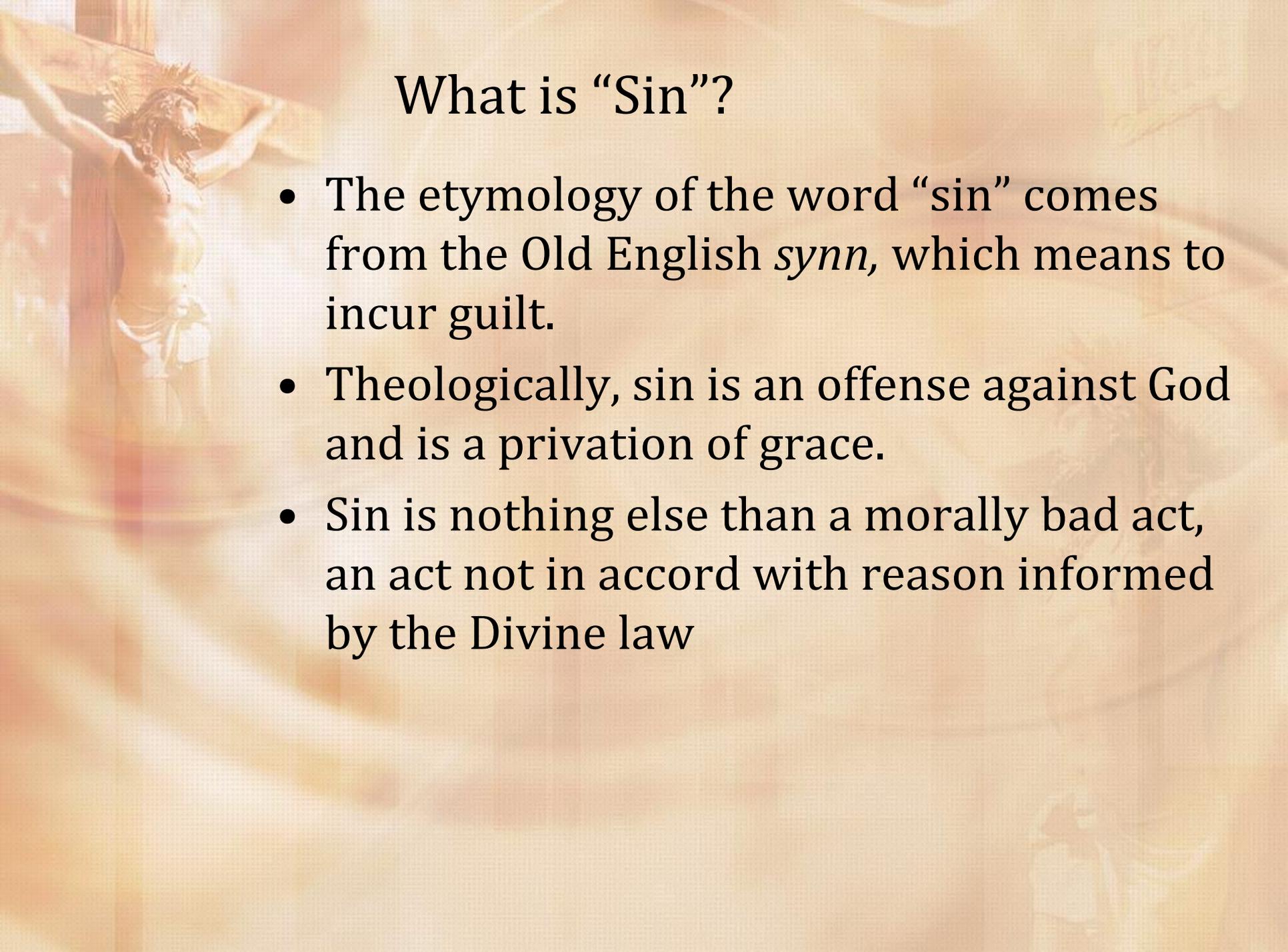


## Prayer before study

O ineffable Creator, true source of light and wisdom, origin of all things, be pleased to cast a beam of your radiance upon the darkness of my mind.

Take from me the double darkness of sin and ignorance in which I was born. Give me quickness of understanding, a retentive memory, the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally, and abundant grace of expression.

Order the beginning, direct the progress and perfect the achievement of my work. You who are true God and true Man and who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

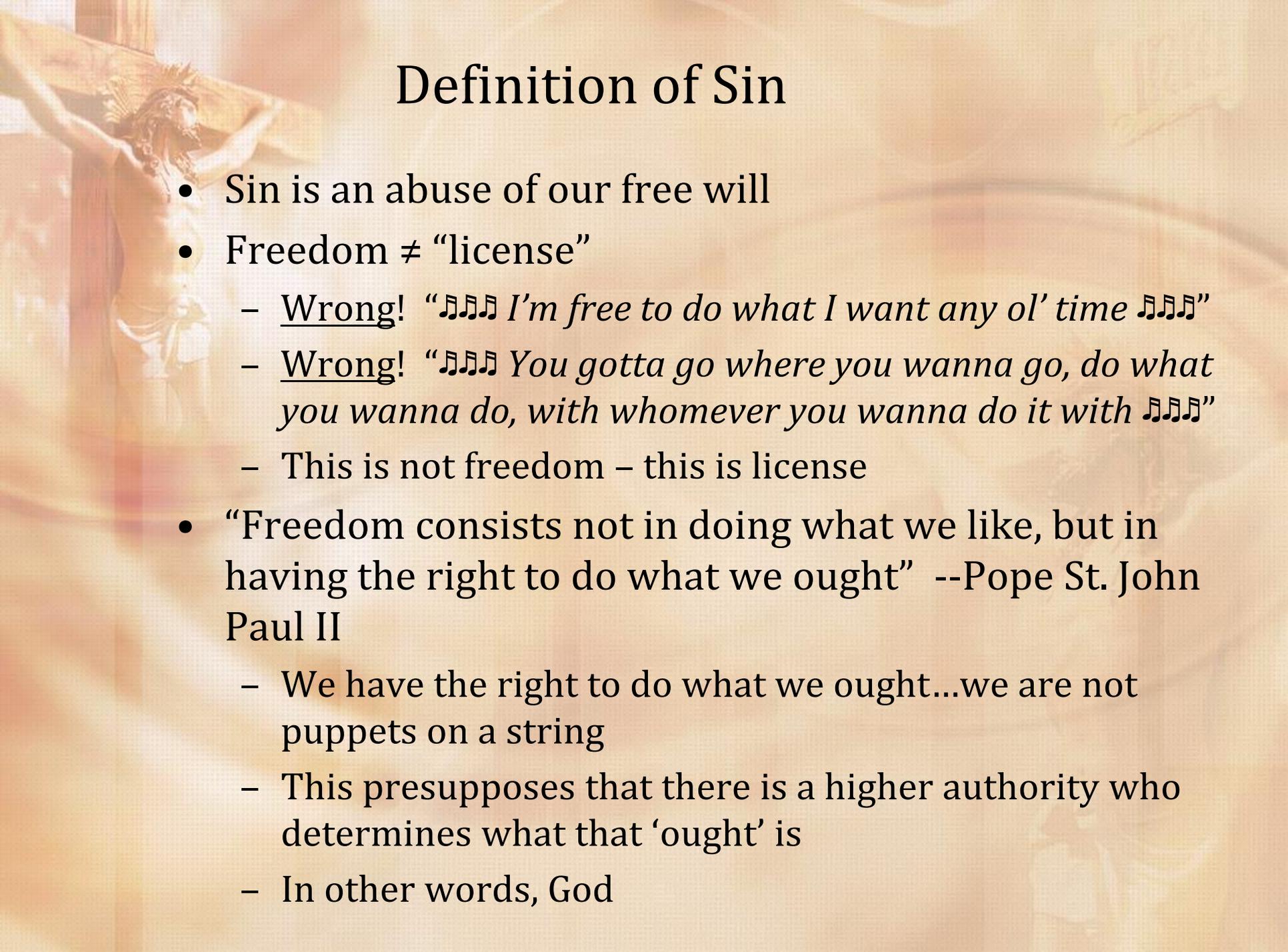


## What is “Sin”?

- The etymology of the word “sin” comes from the Old English *synn*, which means to incur guilt.
- Theologically, sin is an offense against God and is a privation of grace.
- Sin is nothing else than a morally bad act, an act not in accord with reason informed by the Divine law

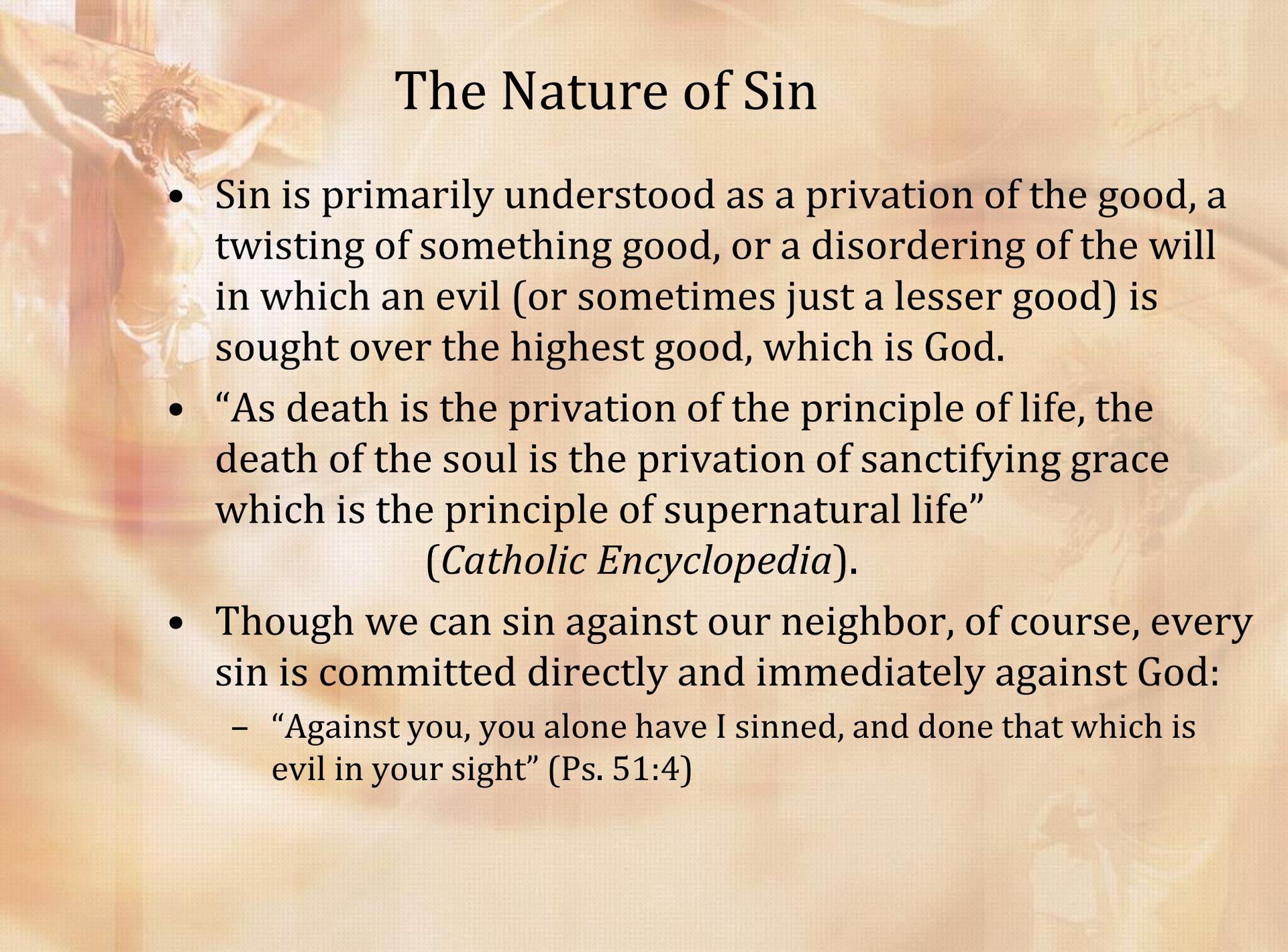
# Definition of Sin

- Sin is:
  - An offense against God
  - An offense against reason, truth and “right” conscience.
    - NB – conscience must be well formed according to the law of God
  - A failure of genuine love of God and/or neighbor
  - Ultimately, sin is disobedience to the will of God, a revolt against God’s law
    - It sets us against God’s love for us and turns our hearts away from it



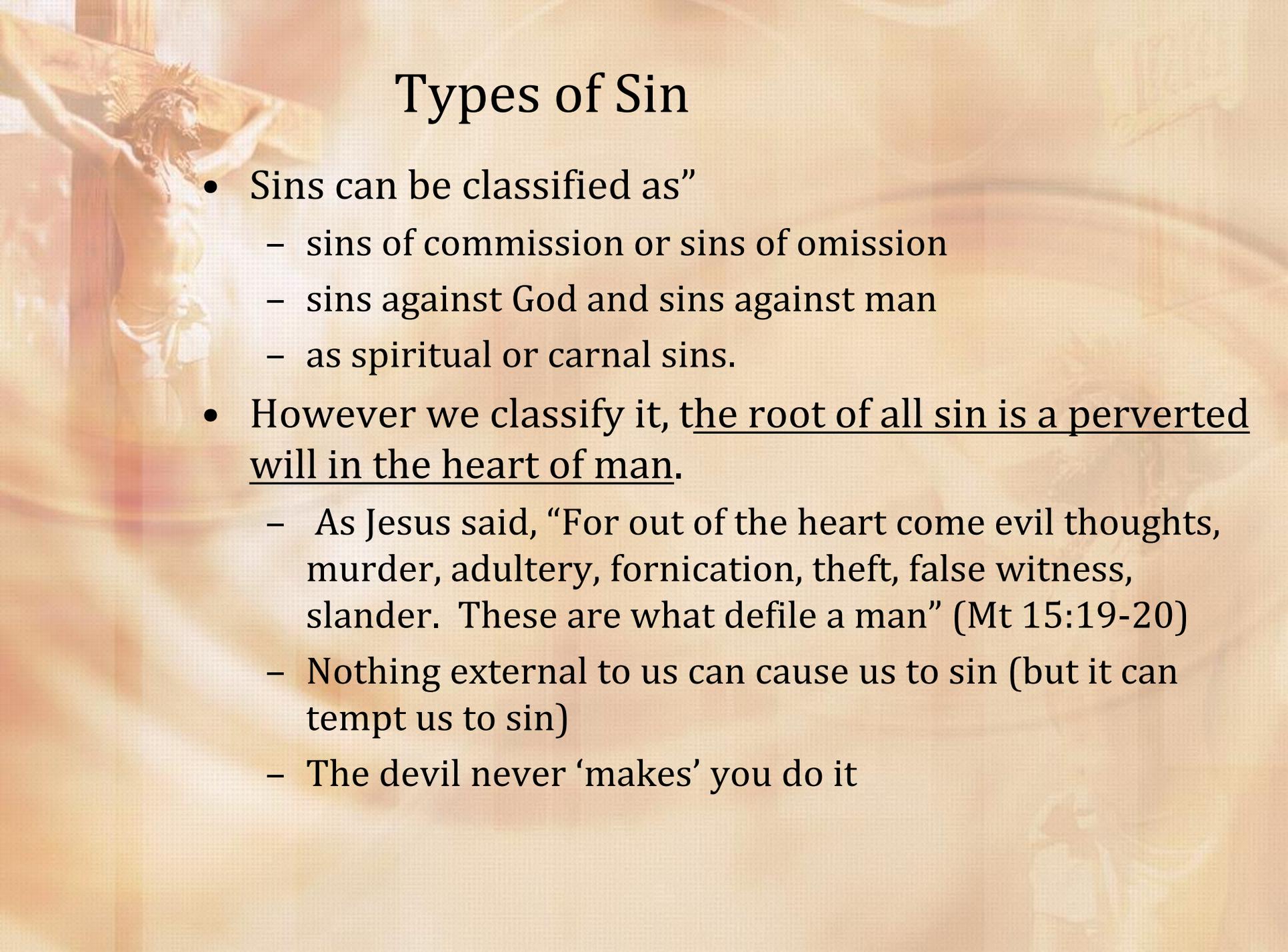
# Definition of Sin

- Sin is an abuse of our free will
- Freedom ≠ “license”
  - Wrong! “*♪♪♪ I’m free to do what I want any ol’ time ♪♪♪*”
  - Wrong! “*♪♪♪ You gotta go where you wanna go, do what you wanna do, with whomever you wanna do it with ♪♪♪*”
  - This is not freedom – this is license
- “Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought” --Pope St. John Paul II
  - We have the right to do what we ought...we are not puppets on a string
  - This presupposes that there is a higher authority who determines what that ‘ought’ is
  - In other words, God



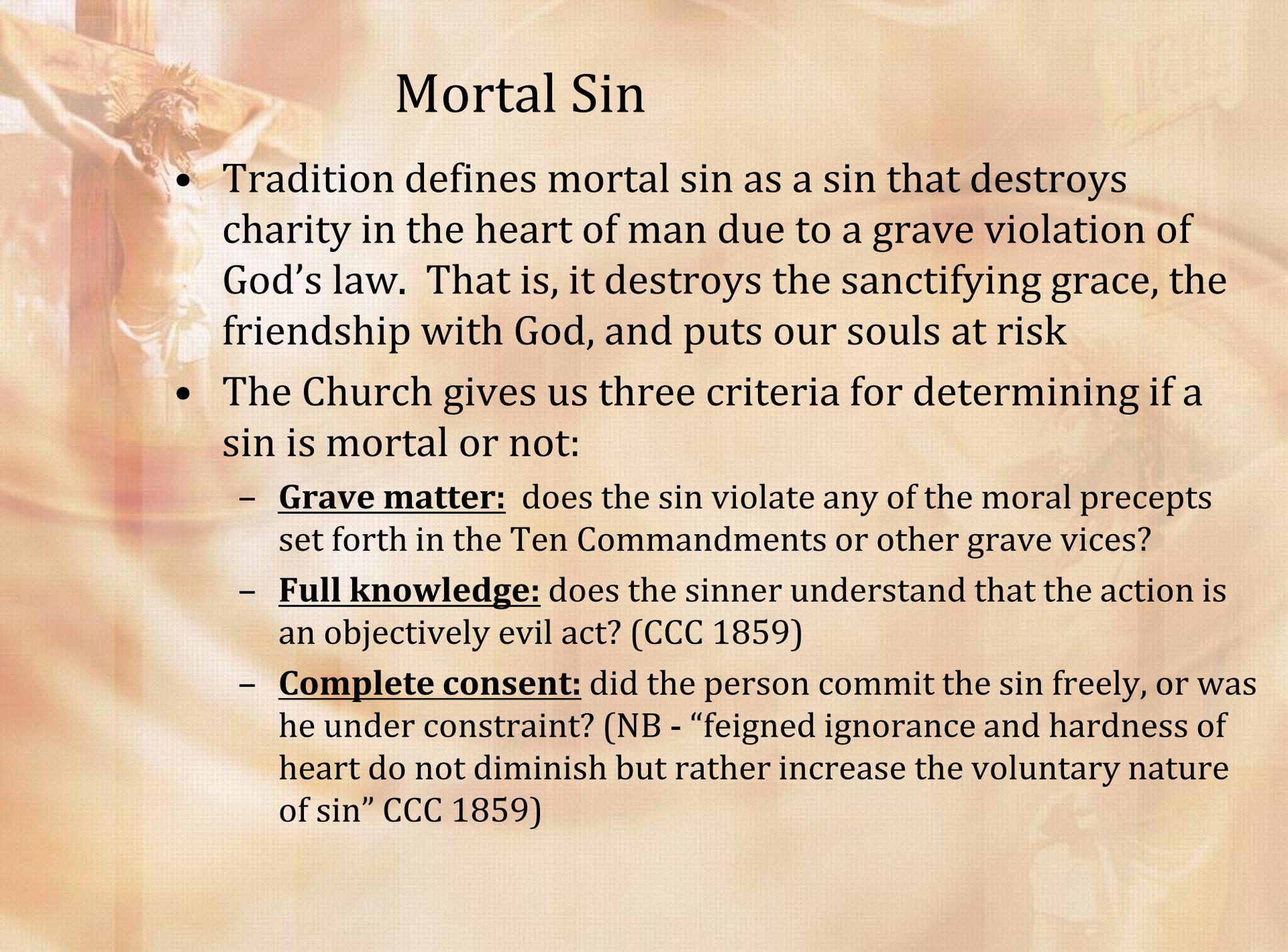
# The Nature of Sin

- Sin is primarily understood as a privation of the good, a twisting of something good, or a disordering of the will in which an evil (or sometimes just a lesser good) is sought over the highest good, which is God.
- “As death is the privation of the principle of life, the death of the soul is the privation of sanctifying grace which is the principle of supernatural life”  
*(Catholic Encyclopedia)*.
- Though we can sin against our neighbor, of course, every sin is committed directly and immediately against God:
  - “Against you, you alone have I sinned, and done that which is evil in your sight” (Ps. 51:4)



# Types of Sin

- Sins can be classified as”
  - sins of commission or sins of omission
  - sins against God and sins against man
  - as spiritual or carnal sins.
- However we classify it, the root of all sin is a perverted will in the heart of man.
  - As Jesus said, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man” (Mt 15:19-20)
  - Nothing external to us can cause us to sin (but it can tempt us to sin)
  - The devil never ‘makes’ you do it



# Mortal Sin

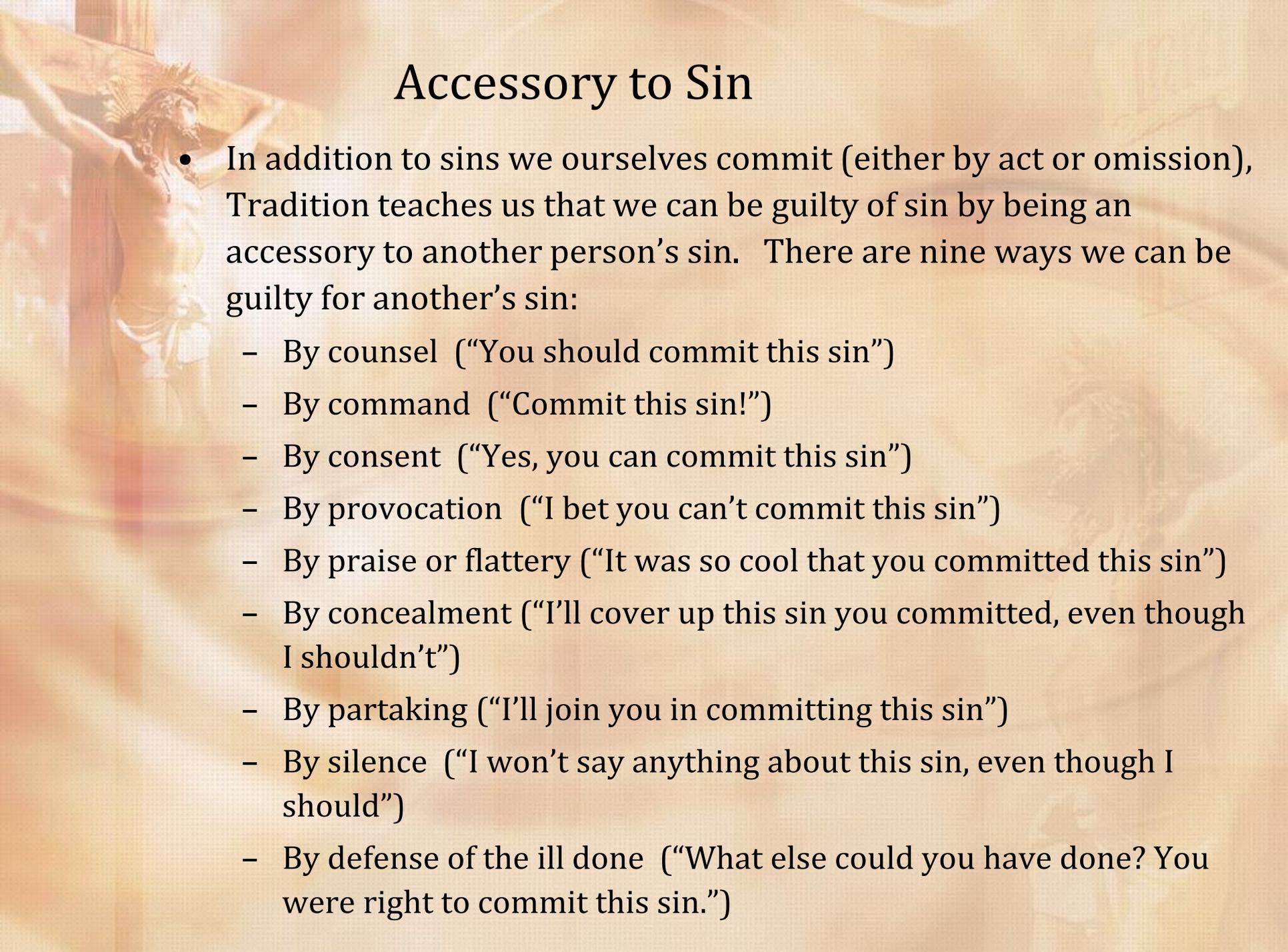
- Tradition defines mortal sin as a sin that destroys charity in the heart of man due to a grave violation of God's law. That is, it destroys the sanctifying grace, the friendship with God, and puts our souls at risk
- The Church gives us three criteria for determining if a sin is mortal or not:
  - **Grave matter:** does the sin violate any of the moral precepts set forth in the Ten Commandments or other grave vices?
  - **Full knowledge:** does the sinner understand that the action is an objectively evil act? (CCC 1859)
  - **Complete consent:** did the person commit the sin freely, or was he under constraint? (NB - "feigned ignorance and hardness of heart do not diminish but rather increase the voluntary nature of sin" CCC 1859)

# Mortal Sin

- All three of these components must be met for the sin to be mortal; if any one is lacking, it is not a mortal sin.
- Circumstances and unintentional ignorance can diminish or even remove the guilt of a grave offense (although no one is deemed ignorant of the moral law).
- We must distinguish here between *malum* (the objective evil committed), and the *culpa* (the subjective level of responsibility incurred by the sinner).
  - One can commit a *malum* without incurring the *culpa* if there is ignorance or some other mitigating factor.
  - In a mortal sin, the sinner is guilty of both *malum* and *culpa*.

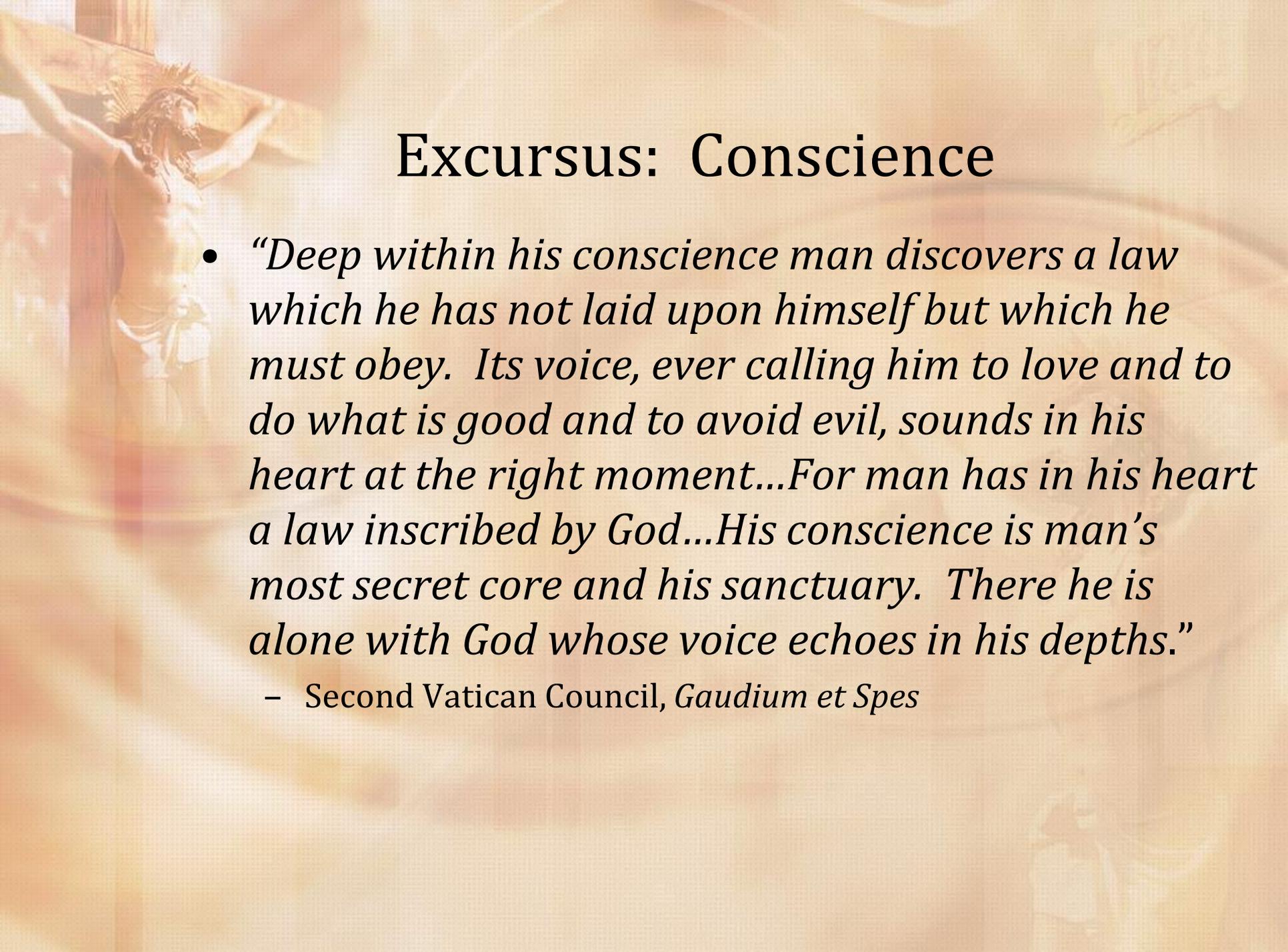
# Venial Sin

- “Venial sin weakens charity; it manifests a disordered affection for created goods; it impedes the soul’s progress in the exercise of the virtues and the practice of the moral good; it merits temporal punishment (Purgatory).
- Deliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin.
- However venial sin does not set us in direct opposition to the will and friendship of God; it does not break the covenant with God. With God’s grace, it is humanly reparable.”-CCC 1863
- St. Augustine taught, “While he is in the flesh, man cannot help but have at least some light sins. But do not ignore these sins which we call “light.” If you take them for light when you weigh them, tremble when you count them up...What then is our hope? Above all, confession.”



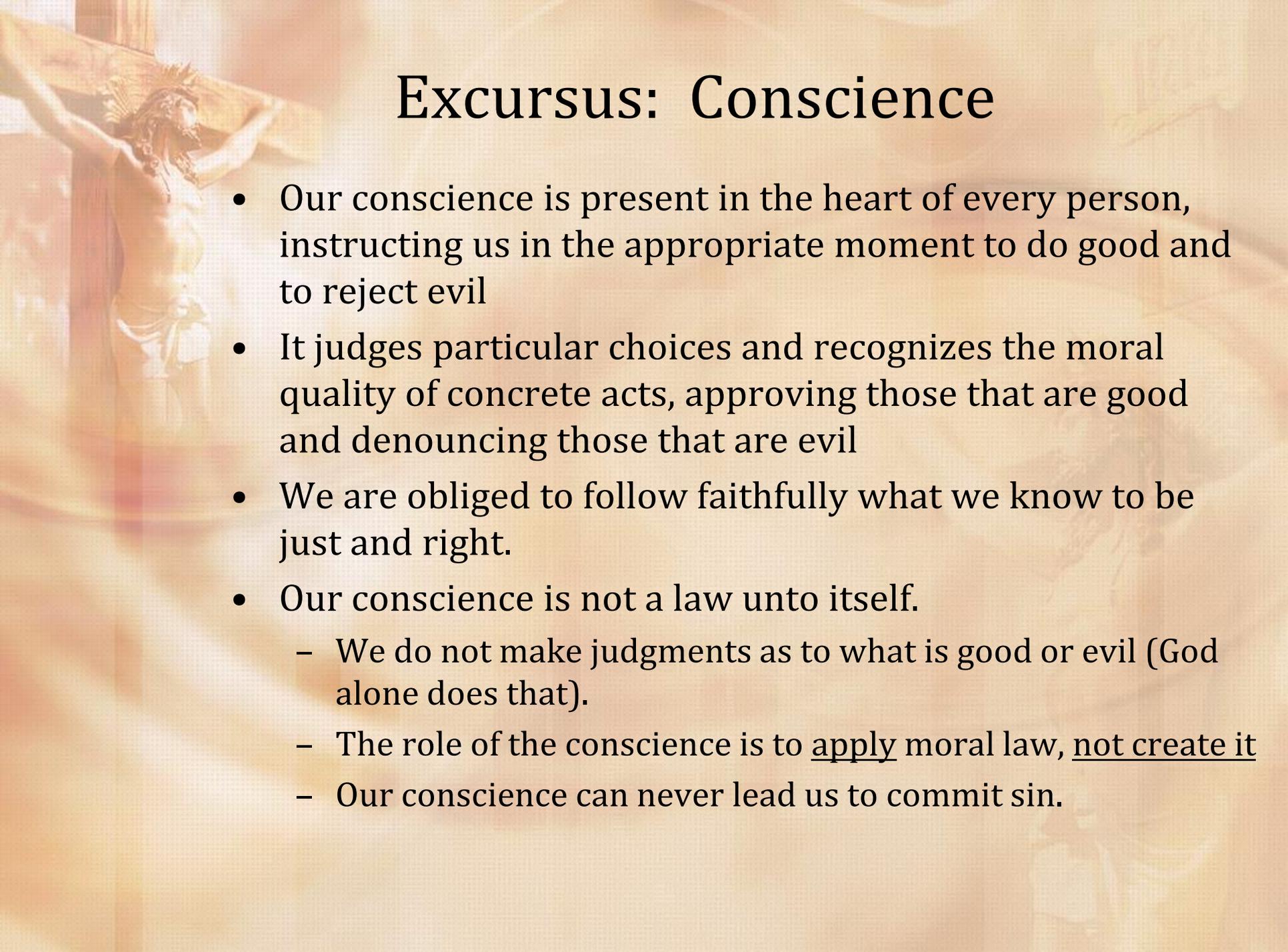
# Accessory to Sin

- In addition to sins we ourselves commit (either by act or omission), Tradition teaches us that we can be guilty of sin by being an accessory to another person's sin. There are nine ways we can be guilty for another's sin:
  - By counsel ("You should commit this sin")
  - By command ("Commit this sin!")
  - By consent ("Yes, you can commit this sin")
  - By provocation ("I bet you can't commit this sin")
  - By praise or flattery ("It was so cool that you committed this sin")
  - By concealment ("I'll cover up this sin you committed, even though I shouldn't")
  - By partaking ("I'll join you in committing this sin")
  - By silence ("I won't say anything about this sin, even though I should")
  - By defense of the ill done ("What else could you have done? You were right to commit this sin.")



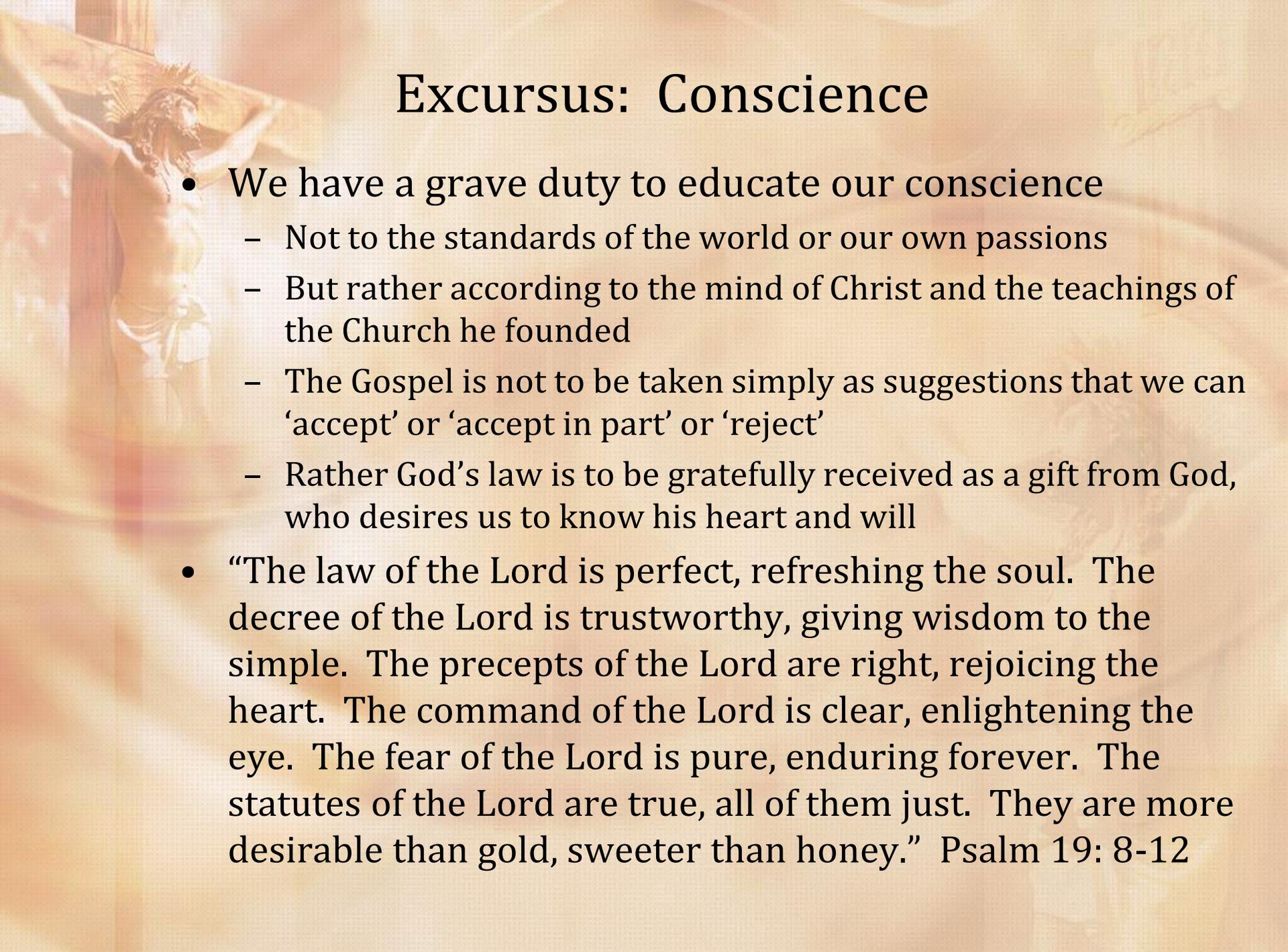
## Excursus: Conscience

- *“Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment...For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God...His conscience is man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths.”*
  - Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*



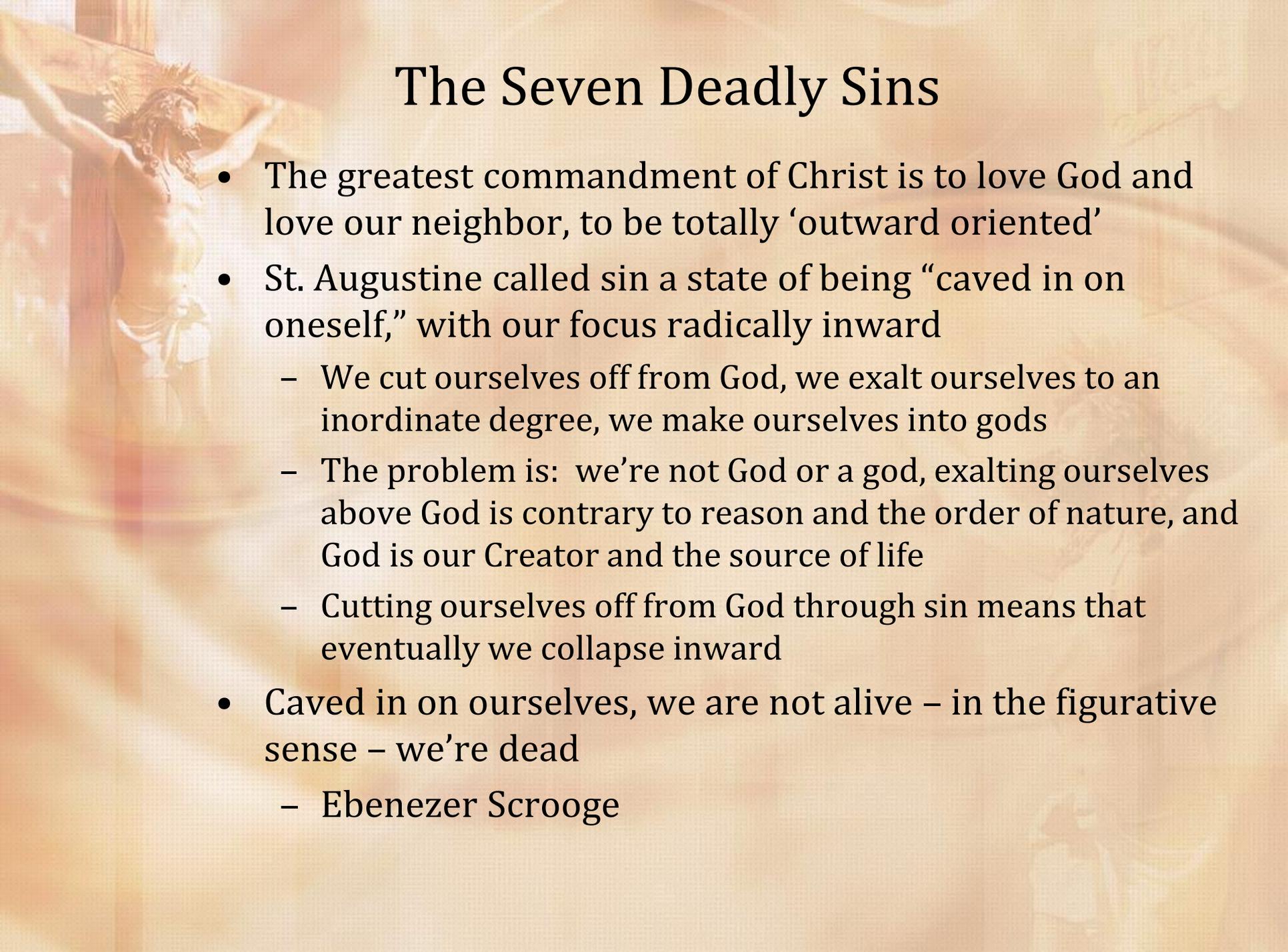
# Excursus: Conscience

- Our conscience is present in the heart of every person, instructing us in the appropriate moment to do good and to reject evil
- It judges particular choices and recognizes the moral quality of concrete acts, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil
- We are obliged to follow faithfully what we know to be just and right.
- Our conscience is not a law unto itself.
  - We do not make judgments as to what is good or evil (God alone does that).
  - The role of the conscience is to apply moral law, not create it
  - Our conscience can never lead us to commit sin.



# Excursus: Conscience

- We have a grave duty to educate our conscience
  - Not to the standards of the world or our own passions
  - But rather according to the mind of Christ and the teachings of the Church he founded
  - The Gospel is not to be taken simply as suggestions that we can ‘accept’ or ‘accept in part’ or ‘reject’
  - Rather God’s law is to be gratefully received as a gift from God, who desires us to know his heart and will
- “The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The statutes of the Lord are true, all of them just. They are more desirable than gold, sweeter than honey.” Psalm 19: 8-12



# The Seven Deadly Sins

- The greatest commandment of Christ is to love God and love our neighbor, to be totally 'outward oriented'
- St. Augustine called sin a state of being "caved in on oneself," with our focus radically inward
  - We cut ourselves off from God, we exalt ourselves to an inordinate degree, we make ourselves into gods
  - The problem is: we're not God or a god, exalting ourselves above God is contrary to reason and the order of nature, and God is our Creator and the source of life
  - Cutting ourselves off from God through sin means that eventually we collapse inward
- Caved in on ourselves, we are not alive – in the figurative sense – we're dead
  - Ebenezer Scrooge

# The Seven Deadly Sins

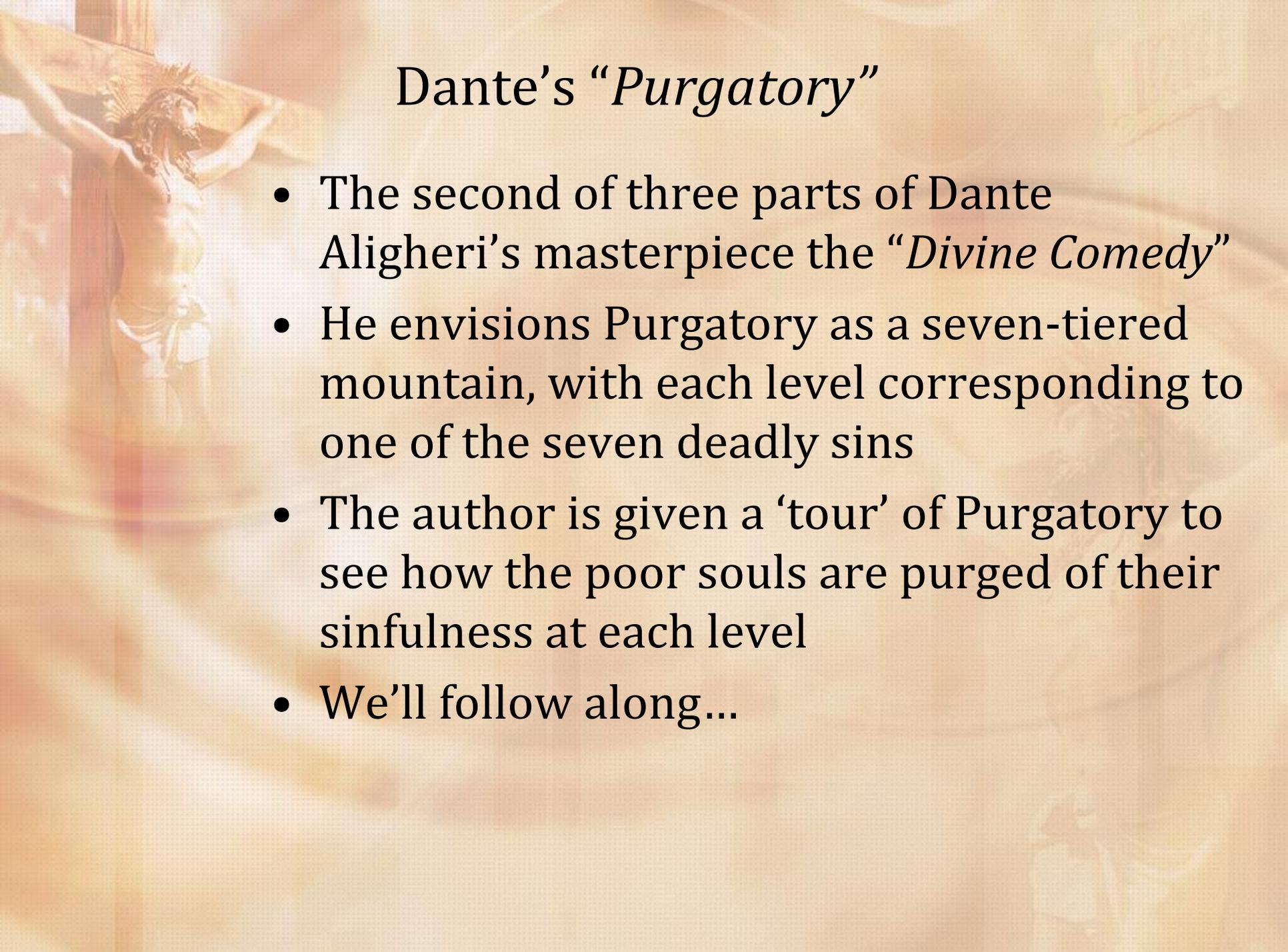
- Down through the centuries, Holy Mother Church – the greatest teacher and student of human nature – has discerned seven ways in which we ‘cave in on ourselves,’ and has called them the Seven Deadly Sins
  - In a sense, every other sin derives from these seven
- They are deadly because they kill the soul, destroying our relationship with God and the sanctifying grace of our baptism
- St. Athanasius (4<sup>th</sup> century) said that, “the glory of God is man fully alive.”
- But the Seven Deadly Sins wrap us up and ‘kill’ us in a collapsing heap of self-centeredness – and they prevent us from being alive in the way God calls us to be.

# The Seven Deadly Sins

- The Seven Deadly Sins are:
  - Pride
  - Envy
  - Wrath
  - Sloth (Acedia)
  - Greed (Avarice)
  - Gluttony
  - Lust

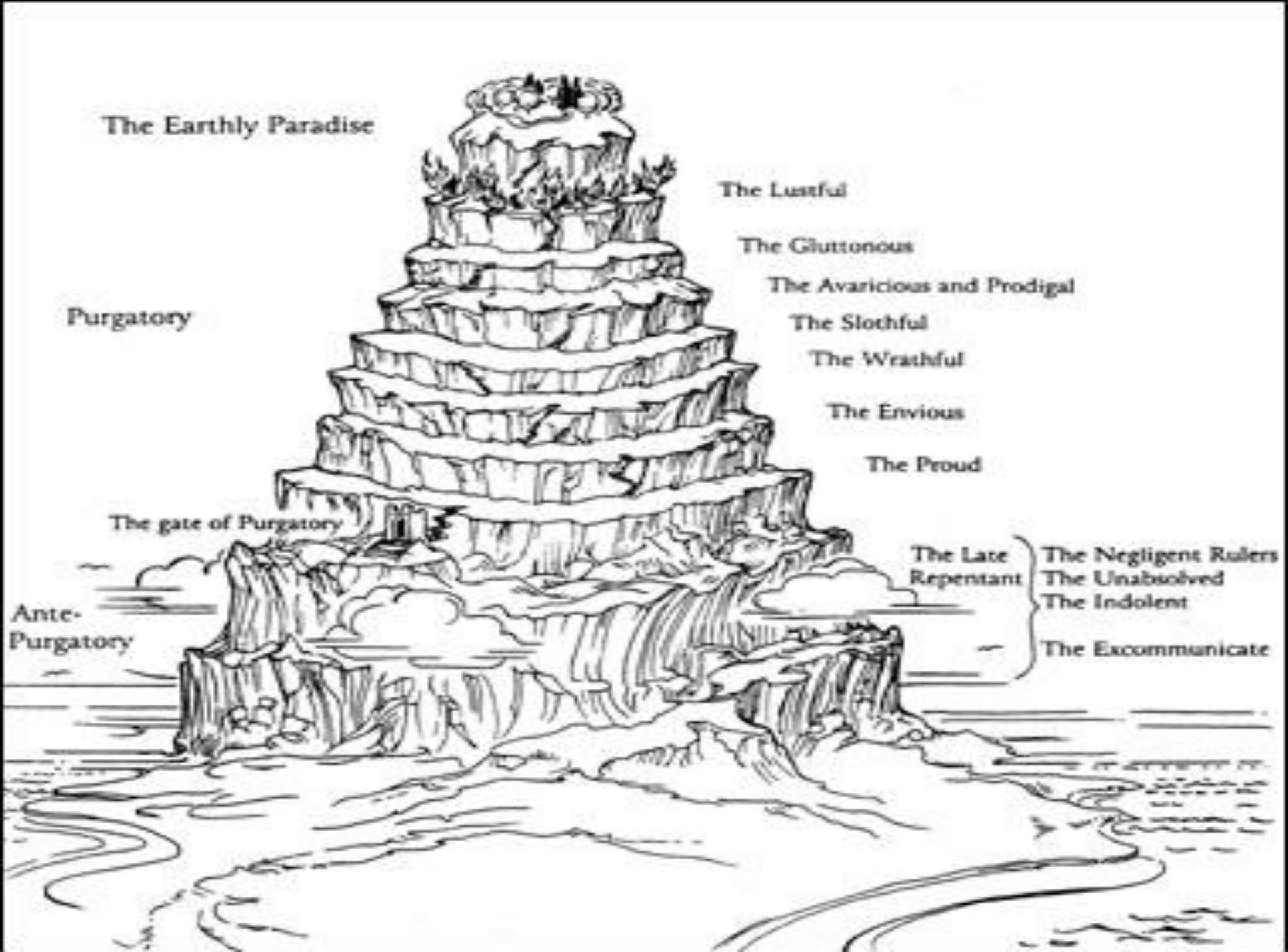
# One thing in common...

- All the deadly sins have one thing in common
  - They are radically turned inward, towards the self – and away from God and away from others
- Jesus taught us:
  - “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” (Mt 16:24)
  - “You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Lk 10:27)
- Note the difference – the deadly sins are radically turned inward...the Gospel of Jesus Christ is radically turned outward, towards God and towards others.



## Dante's "*Purgatory*"

- The second of three parts of Dante Alighieri's masterpiece the "*Divine Comedy*"
- He envisions Purgatory as a seven-tiered mountain, with each level corresponding to one of the seven deadly sins
- The author is given a 'tour' of Purgatory to see how the poor souls are purged of their sinfulness at each level
- We'll follow along...



The Earthly Paradise

The Lustful

The Gluttonous

The Avaricious and Prodigal

The Slothful

The Wrathful

The Envious

The Proud

Purgatory

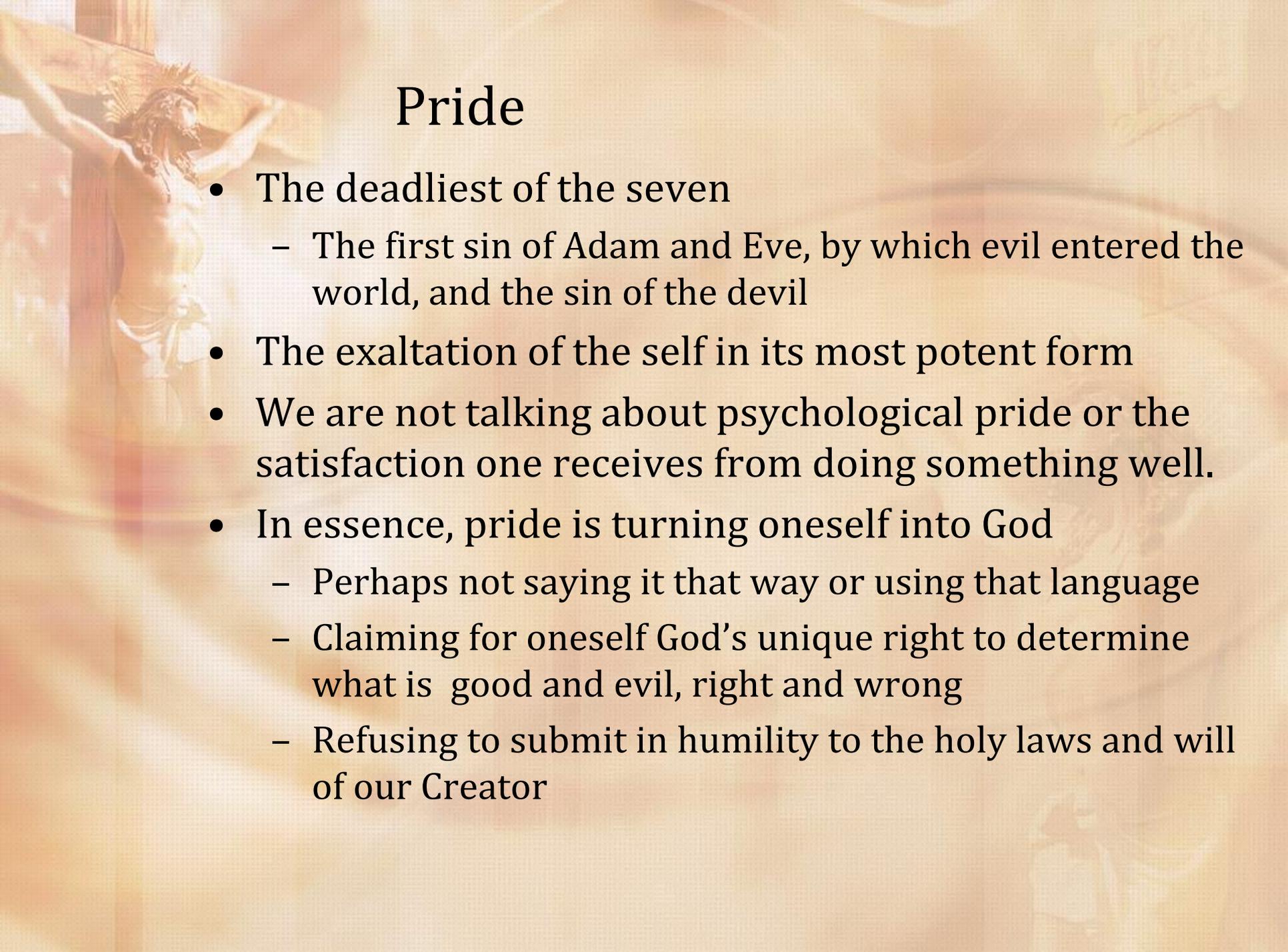
The gate of Purgatory

The Late  
Repentant

The Negligent Rulers  
The Unabsolved  
The Indolent

Ante-  
Purgatory

The Excommunicate



# Pride

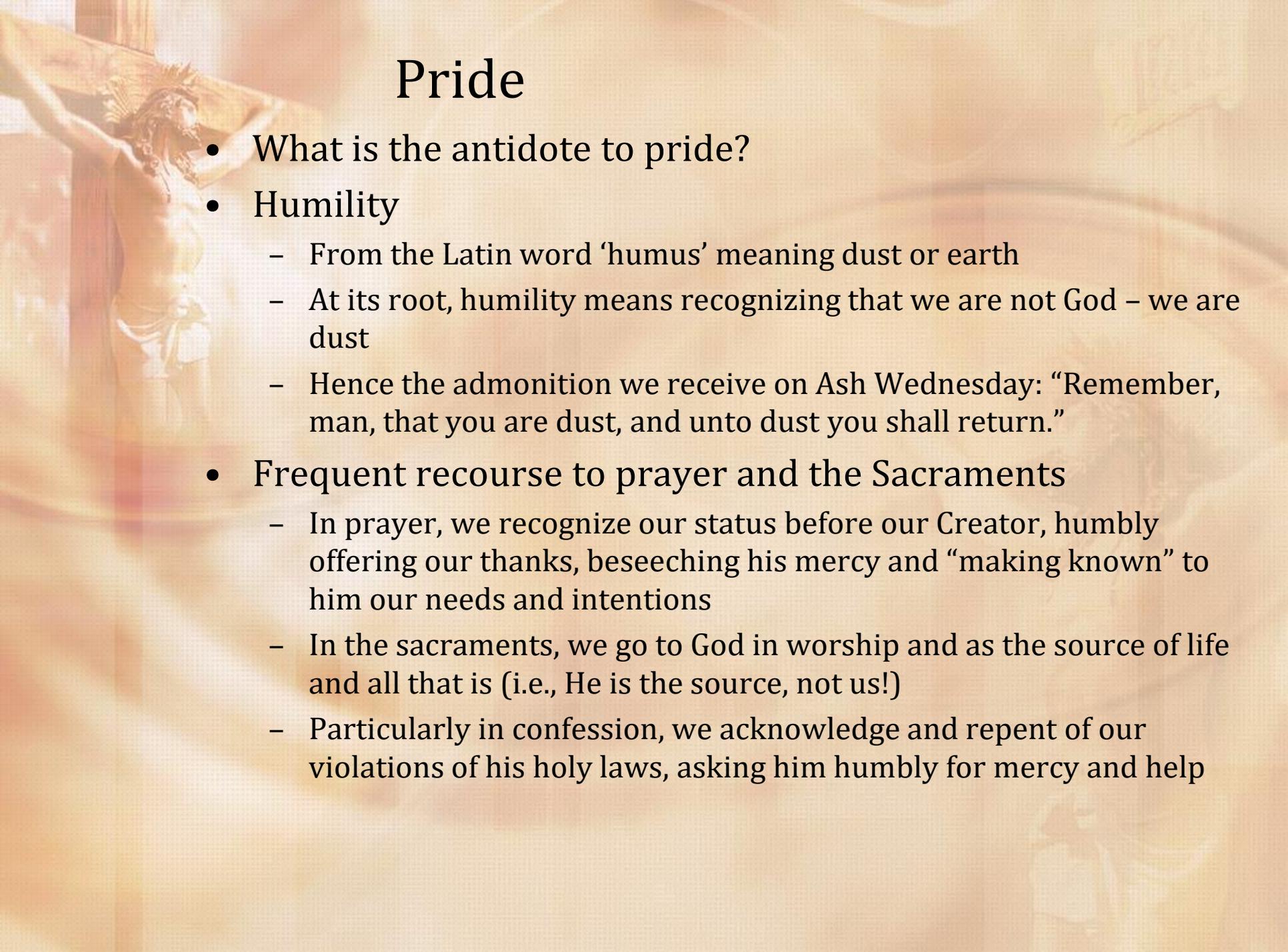
- The deadliest of the seven
  - The first sin of Adam and Eve, by which evil entered the world, and the sin of the devil
- The exaltation of the self in its most potent form
- We are not talking about psychological pride or the satisfaction one receives from doing something well.
- In essence, pride is turning oneself into God
  - Perhaps not saying it that way or using that language
  - Claiming for oneself God's unique right to determine what is good and evil, right and wrong
  - Refusing to submit in humility to the holy laws and will of our Creator

# Pride

- The great reading from Genesis about the Fall of Man
  - The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents God's unique prerogative to determine right and wrong. He is God – he gets to decide that
  - To take the fruit was to usurp God's prerogative and claim that right for themselves, and in essence, to try and deify themselves
  - An abuse of their freedom – they were not free to eat the fruit...in other words, they were not free to determine good and evil.
- "I'll decide what to do. I will determine what is right. I am the arbiter of good and evil. I will take to myself the prerogative to decide because I am, supposedly, free. I will eat that fruit. I am God."
- The exaltation of the self over and above God, pride is the mother of all sins

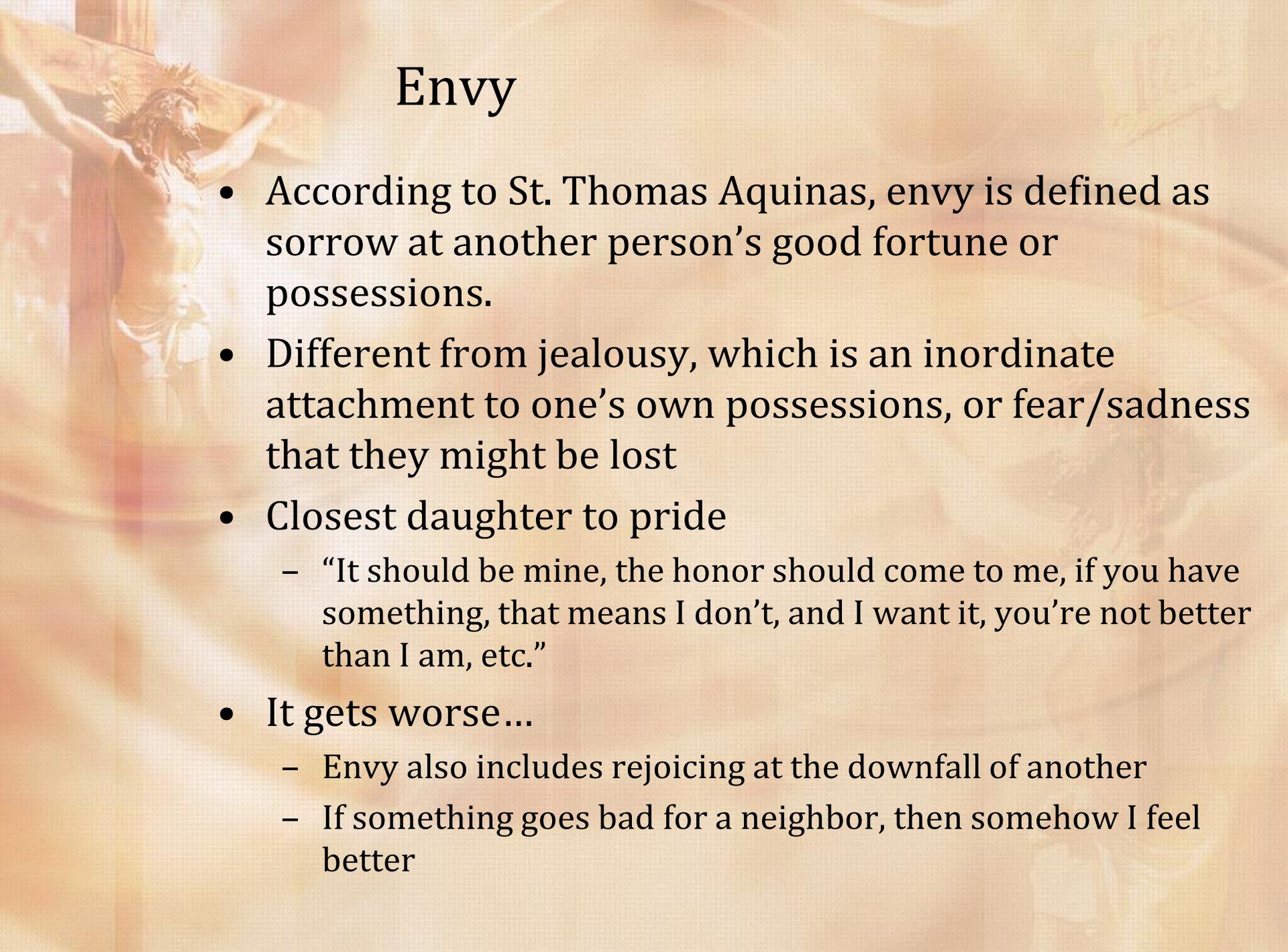
# The proud in Dante's "*Purgatory*"





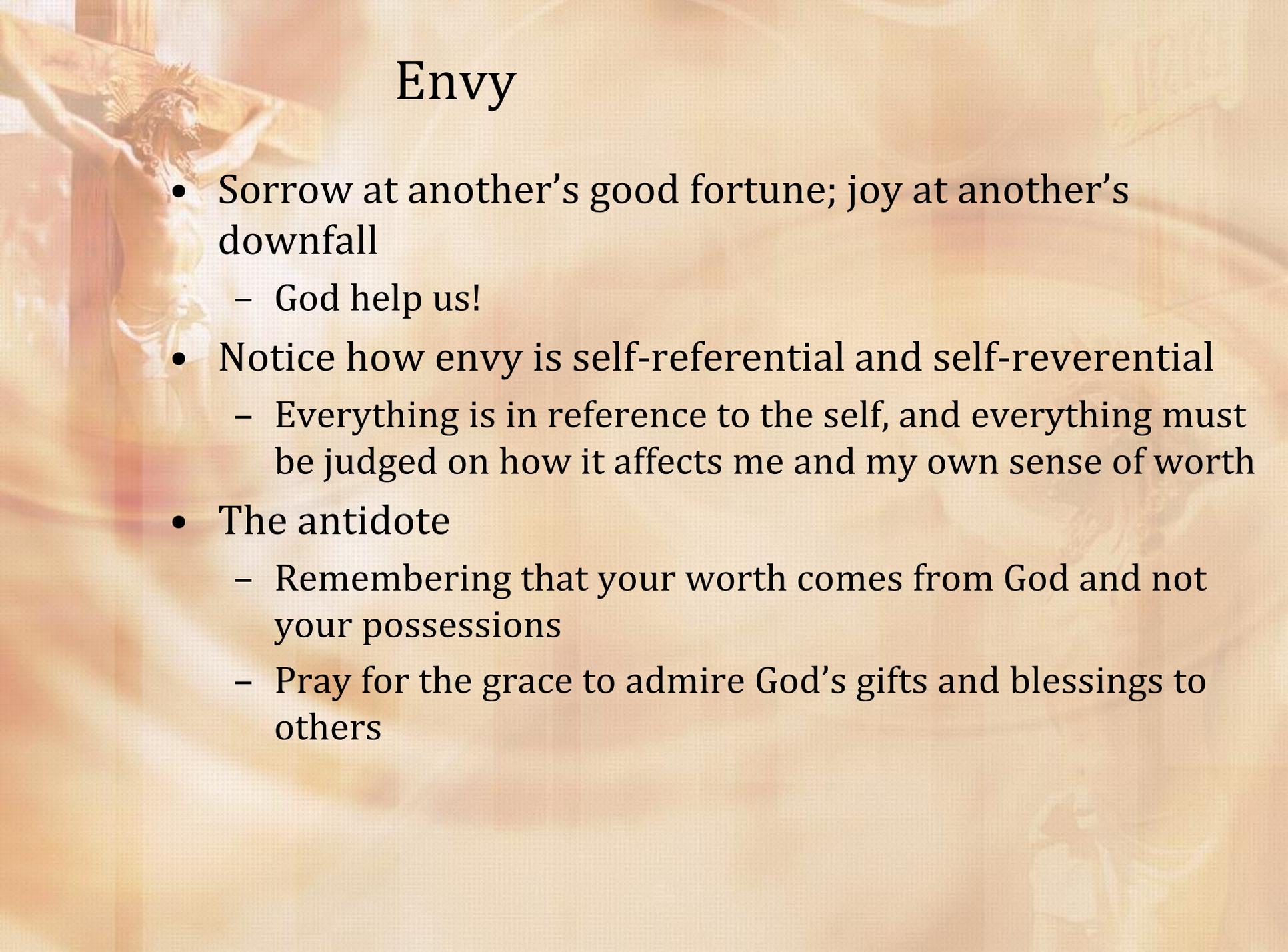
# Pride

- What is the antidote to pride?
- Humility
  - From the Latin word ‘humus’ meaning dust or earth
  - At its root, humility means recognizing that we are not God – we are dust
  - Hence the admonition we receive on Ash Wednesday: “Remember, man, that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return.”
- Frequent recourse to prayer and the Sacraments
  - In prayer, we recognize our status before our Creator, humbly offering our thanks, beseeching his mercy and “making known” to him our needs and intentions
  - In the sacraments, we go to God in worship and as the source of life and all that is (i.e., He is the source, not us!)
  - Particularly in confession, we acknowledge and repent of our violations of his holy laws, asking him humbly for mercy and help



# Envy

- According to St. Thomas Aquinas, envy is defined as sorrow at another person's good fortune or possessions.
- Different from jealousy, which is an inordinate attachment to one's own possessions, or fear/sadness that they might be lost
- Closest daughter to pride
  - “It should be mine, the honor should come to me, if you have something, that means I don't, and I want it, you're not better than I am, etc.”
- It gets worse...
  - Envy also includes rejoicing at the downfall of another
  - If something goes bad for a neighbor, then somehow I feel better



# Envy

- Sorrow at another's good fortune; joy at another's downfall
  - God help us!
- Notice how envy is self-referential and self-reverential
  - Everything is in reference to the self, and everything must be judged on how it affects me and my own sense of worth
- The antidote
  - Remembering that your worth comes from God and not your possessions
  - Pray for the grace to admire God's gifts and blessings to others

# The envious according to Dante



# Wrath

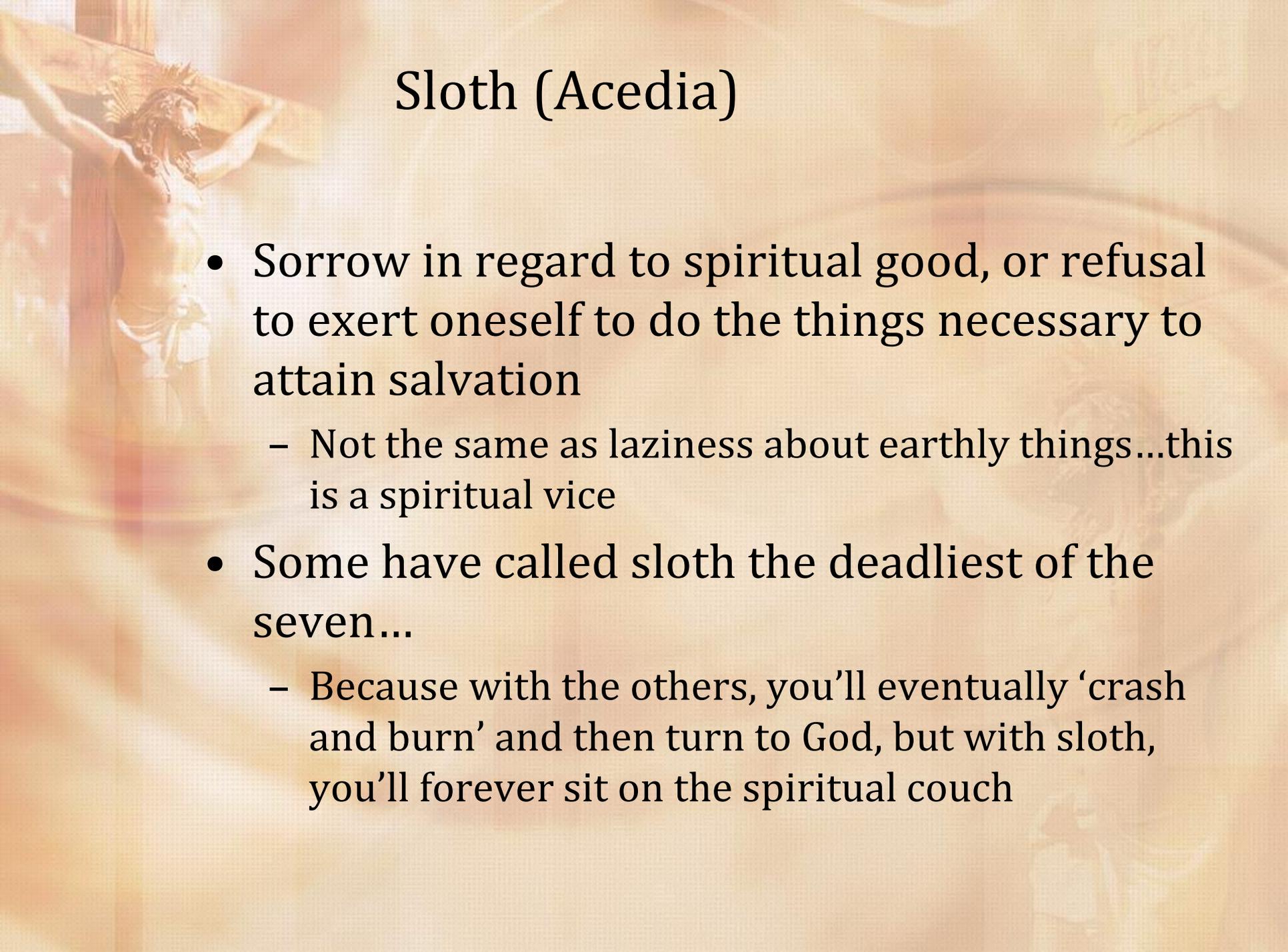
- The unreasonable, immoderate desire for vengeance and to inflict evil upon someone
- We can distinguish this from anger
  - We can legitimately be angry about a lot of things
  - Wrath is unreasonable and immoderate
- We are somehow harmed, and our desire then becomes to return that harm, but not in an equal way
  - It starts on the playground...

# Wrath

- Utterly centered on the self, and ultimately becomes a burden that harms us more than the other, as the rage and anger poison all our relationships, including our relationship with God.
  - How are we able to burn with wrath towards our neighbor and also love God?
- The antidote...forgiveness
- How often do we ask forgiveness from God?
  - In the Lord's Prayer, we condition the forgiveness we ask of God on the measure with which we forgive others.
  - Pay attention to how many times we ask for mercy from God during the Mass
  - Go to confession often!
  - Often, forgiveness is not easy. Pray for the grace to forgive!

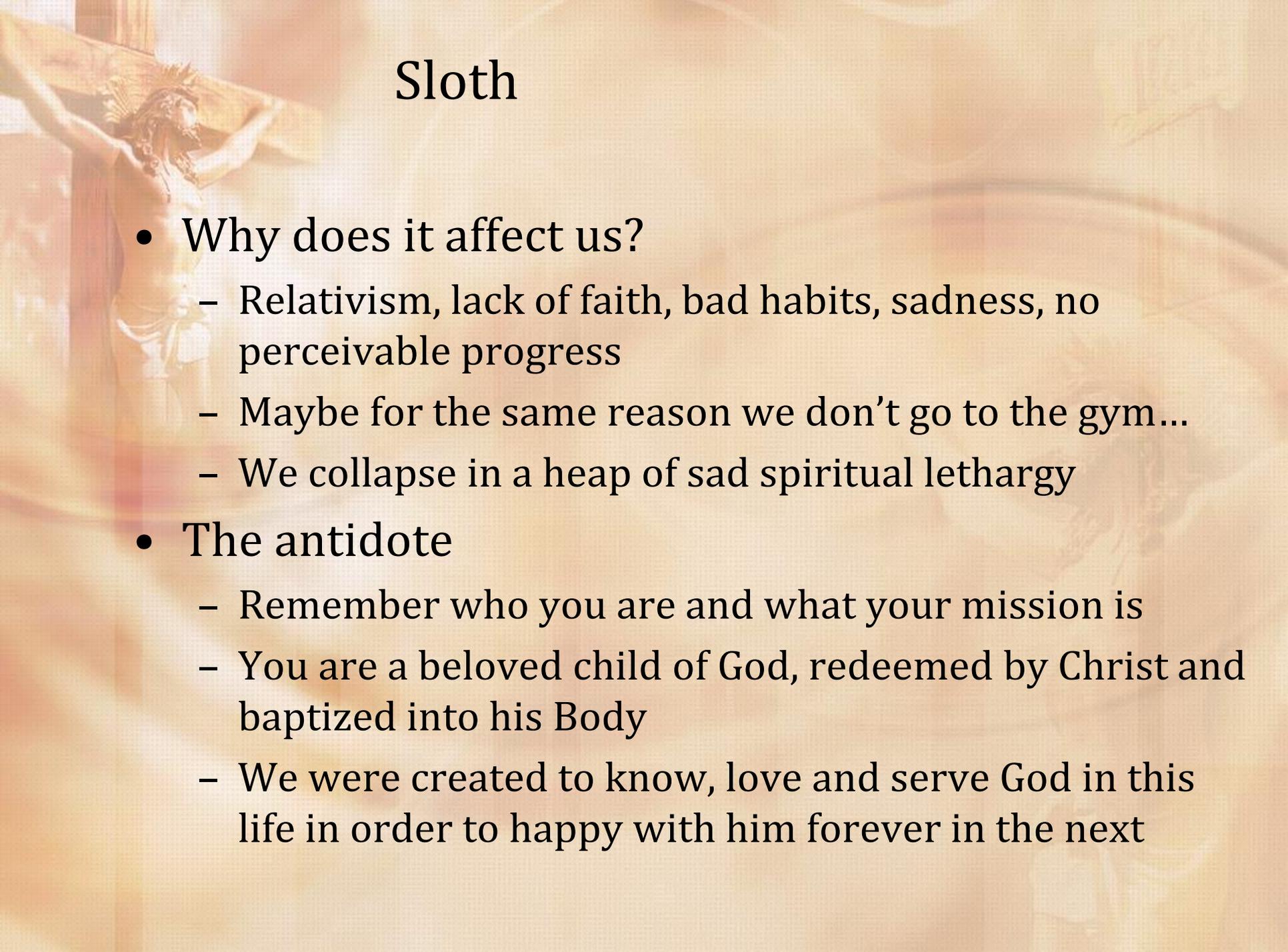
# The wrathful in Purgatory





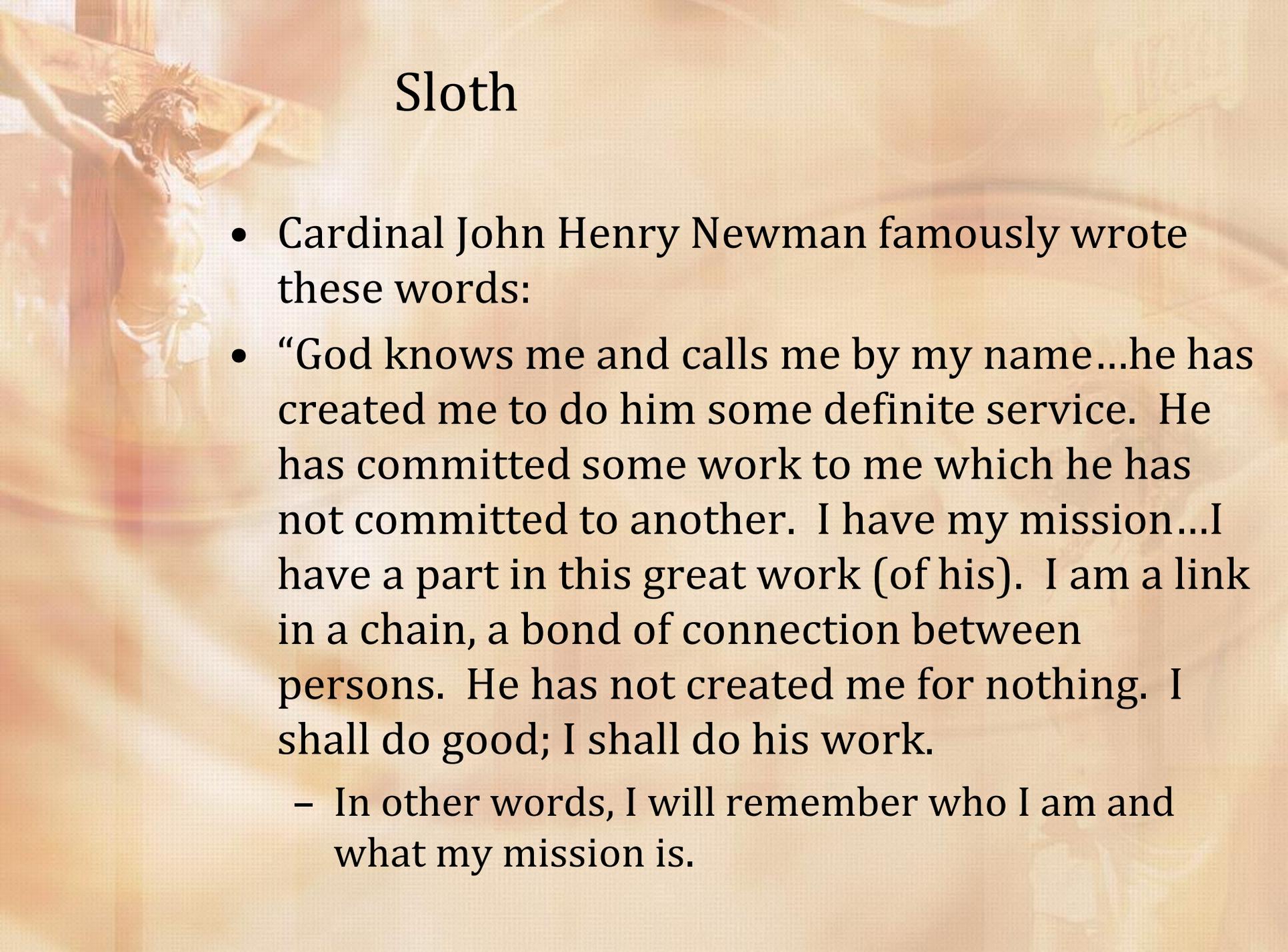
## Sloth (Acedia)

- Sorrow in regard to spiritual good, or refusal to exert oneself to do the things necessary to attain salvation
  - Not the same as laziness about earthly things...this is a spiritual vice
- Some have called sloth the deadliest of the seven...
  - Because with the others, you'll eventually 'crash and burn' and then turn to God, but with sloth, you'll forever sit on the spiritual couch



# Sloth

- Why does it affect us?
  - Relativism, lack of faith, bad habits, sadness, no perceivable progress
  - Maybe for the same reason we don't go to the gym...
  - We collapse in a heap of sad spiritual lethargy
- The antidote
  - Remember who you are and what your mission is
  - You are a beloved child of God, redeemed by Christ and baptized into his Body
  - We were created to know, love and serve God in this life in order to happy with him forever in the next



# Sloth

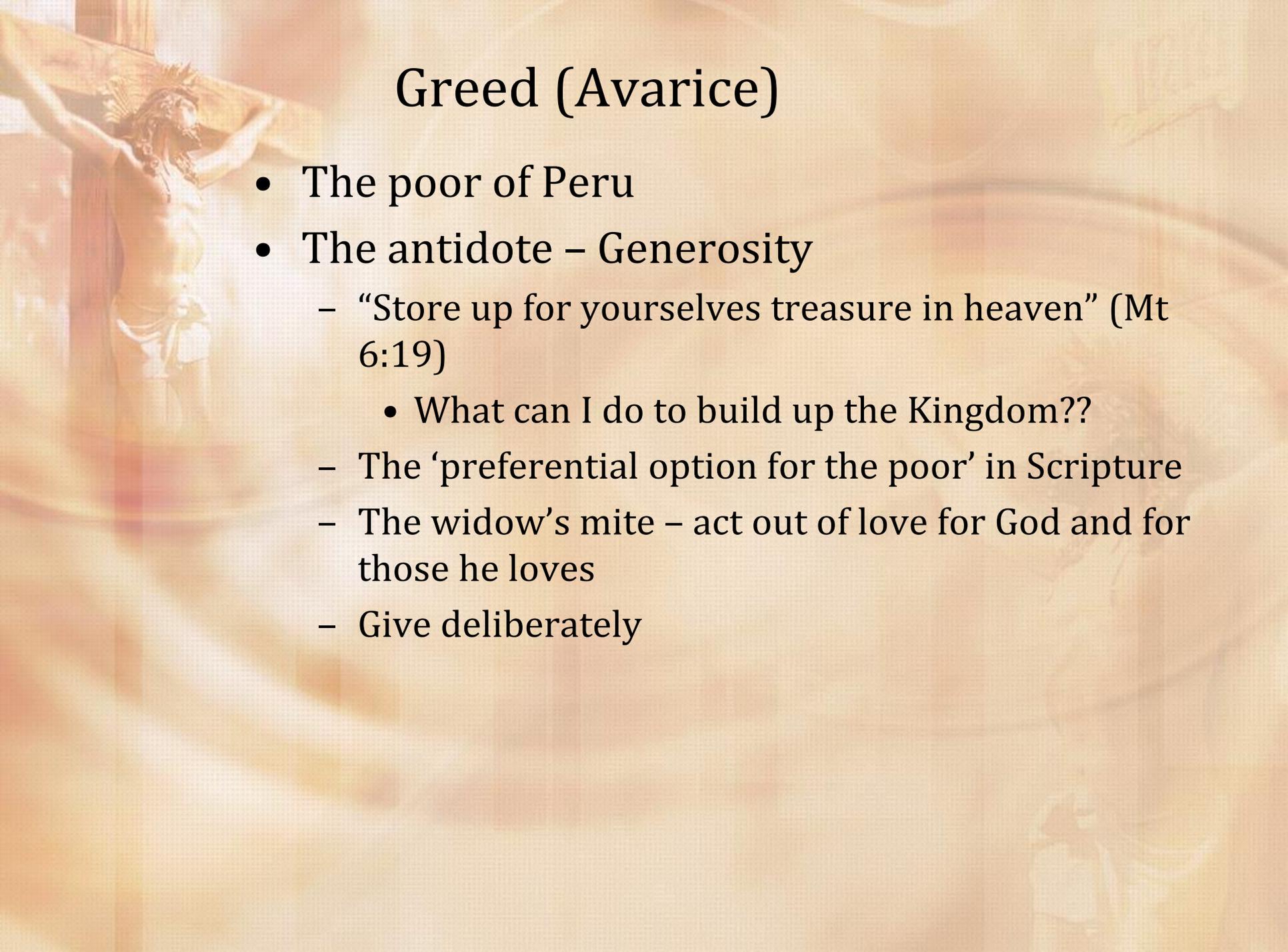
- Cardinal John Henry Newman famously wrote these words:
- “God knows me and calls me by my name...he has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission...I have a part in this great work (of his). I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for nothing. I shall do good; I shall do his work.
  - In other words, I will remember who I am and what my mission is.

The slothful in Purgatory... “Mary ran in haste to the hill country”



# Greed (Avarice)

- The immoderate or unreasonable desire for riches
  - There is a 'moderate and reasonable' desire for material things
- When does it become immoderate or unreasonable?
  - When we begin to seek created things more than the Creator of things
  - When we forget where all our gifts and possessions ultimately come from
  - When the desire for riches prevents us from seeing the needs of others and giving generously to satisfy them

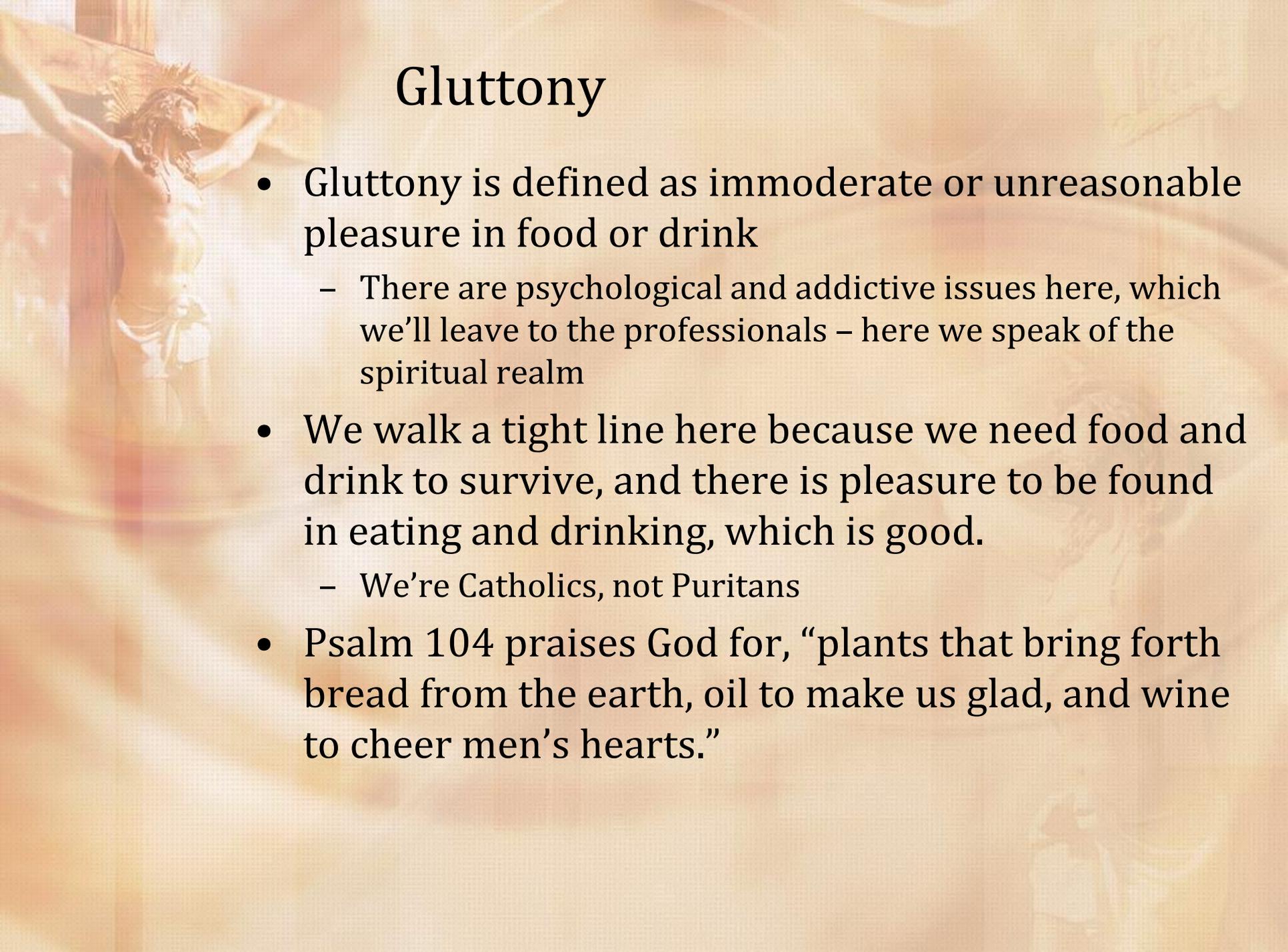


# Greed (Avarice)

- The poor of Peru
- The antidote – Generosity
  - “Store up for yourselves treasure in heaven” (Mt 6:19)
    - What can I do to build up the Kingdom??
  - The ‘preferential option for the poor’ in Scripture
  - The widow’s mite – act out of love for God and for those he loves
  - Give deliberately

# The avaricious in Purgatory





# Gluttony

- Gluttony is defined as immoderate or unreasonable pleasure in food or drink
  - There are psychological and addictive issues here, which we'll leave to the professionals – here we speak of the spiritual realm
- We walk a tight line here because we need food and drink to survive, and there is pleasure to be found in eating and drinking, which is good.
  - We're Catholics, not Puritans
- Psalm 104 praises God for, “plants that bring forth bread from the earth, oil to make us glad, and wine to cheer men's hearts.”

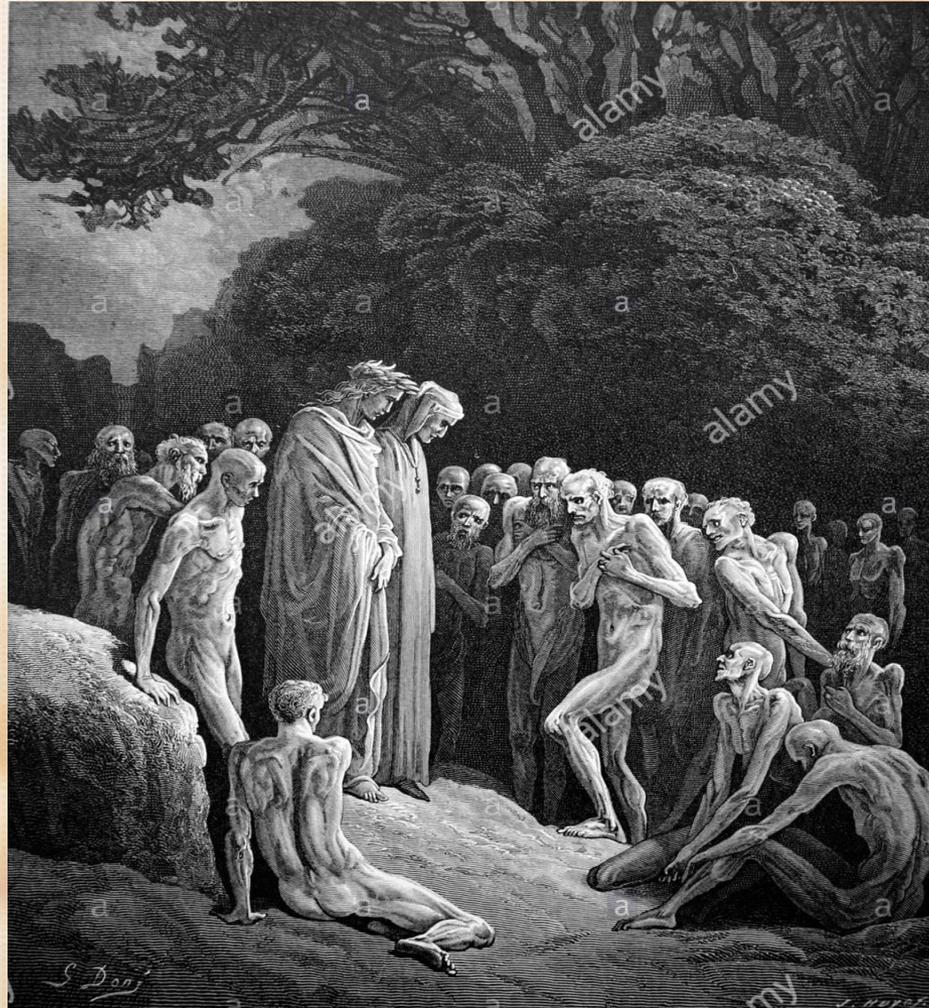
# Gluttony

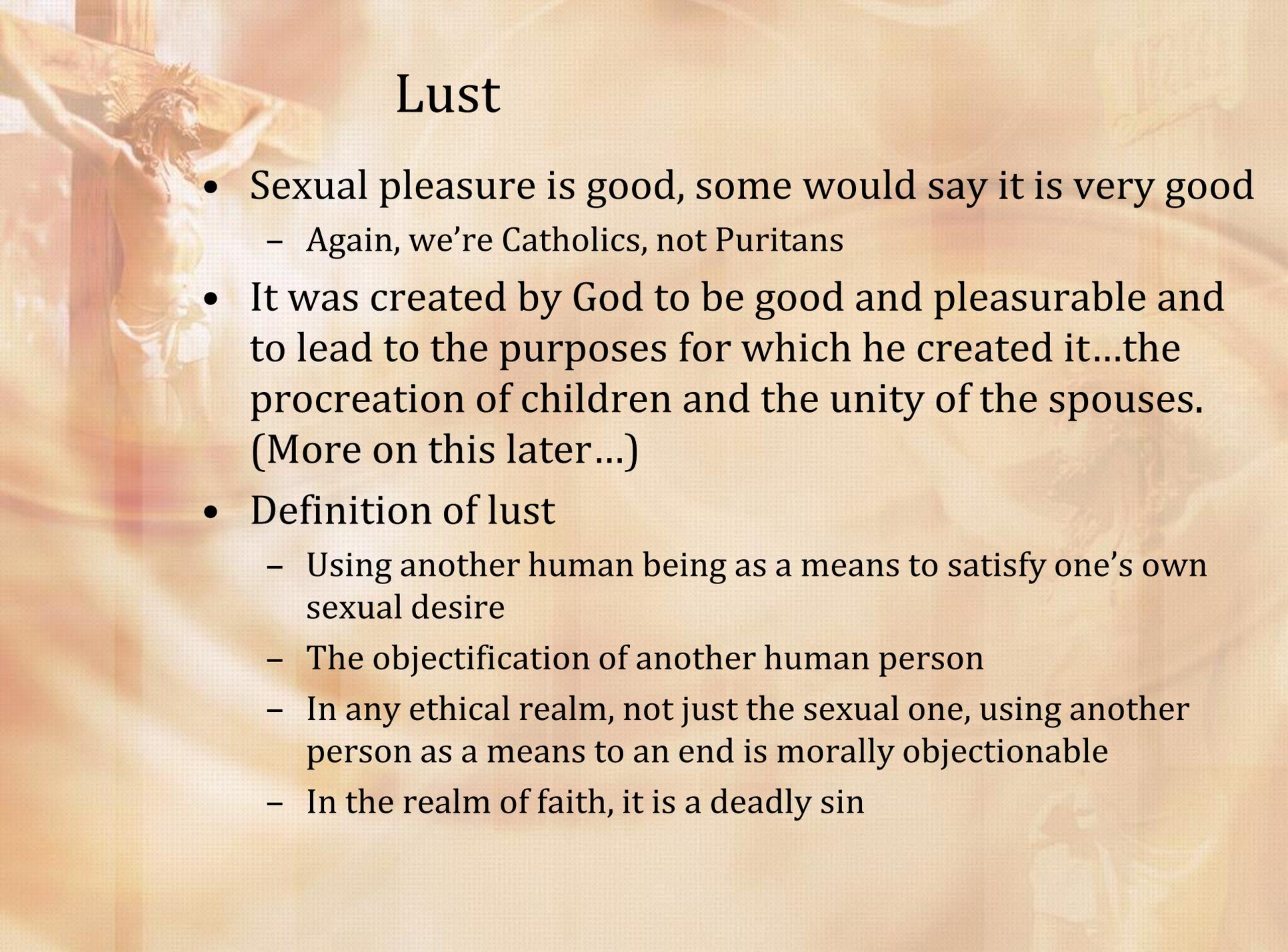
- Pleasure from food and drink reaches a point where it's too much...
  - Similar to Greed, an excessive desire for created things (which are good) prevents us from remaining focused on our highest good, which is God
  - The satisfaction we receive from food and drink can become a substitute for God – for whom we ultimately hunger and thirst
  - When we try to satisfy our infinite hunger (for God) with finite things, it never works
- The woman at the well (Jn 4)
  - And he says to her: “Everyone who drinks of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”
  - I am the source. Only I can satisfy that deepest desire.

# Gluttony

- The antidote: asceticism, fasting
- Helps us take control of our earthly appetites so that they do not control us, and help us re-focus on God, for whom we truly hunger
  - This is why Catholic traditionally “give up” something for Lent. That is, we’re “fasting” from it.
  - We don’t give up things during Lent because they’re bad. (If they’re bad, we should always be giving them up!)
  - We give them up precisely because they are good!
  - To give up an earthly good is to recognize that no earthly good can satisfy us, that earthly goods have the tendency to blur our vision of our highest good, which is God. Giving them up helps us re-focus.
  - Even outside of Lent, periodic “fasting” from pleasurable earthly things is a healthy and venerable practice

# The Gluttonous in Purgatory – “O Lord, open my lips...”



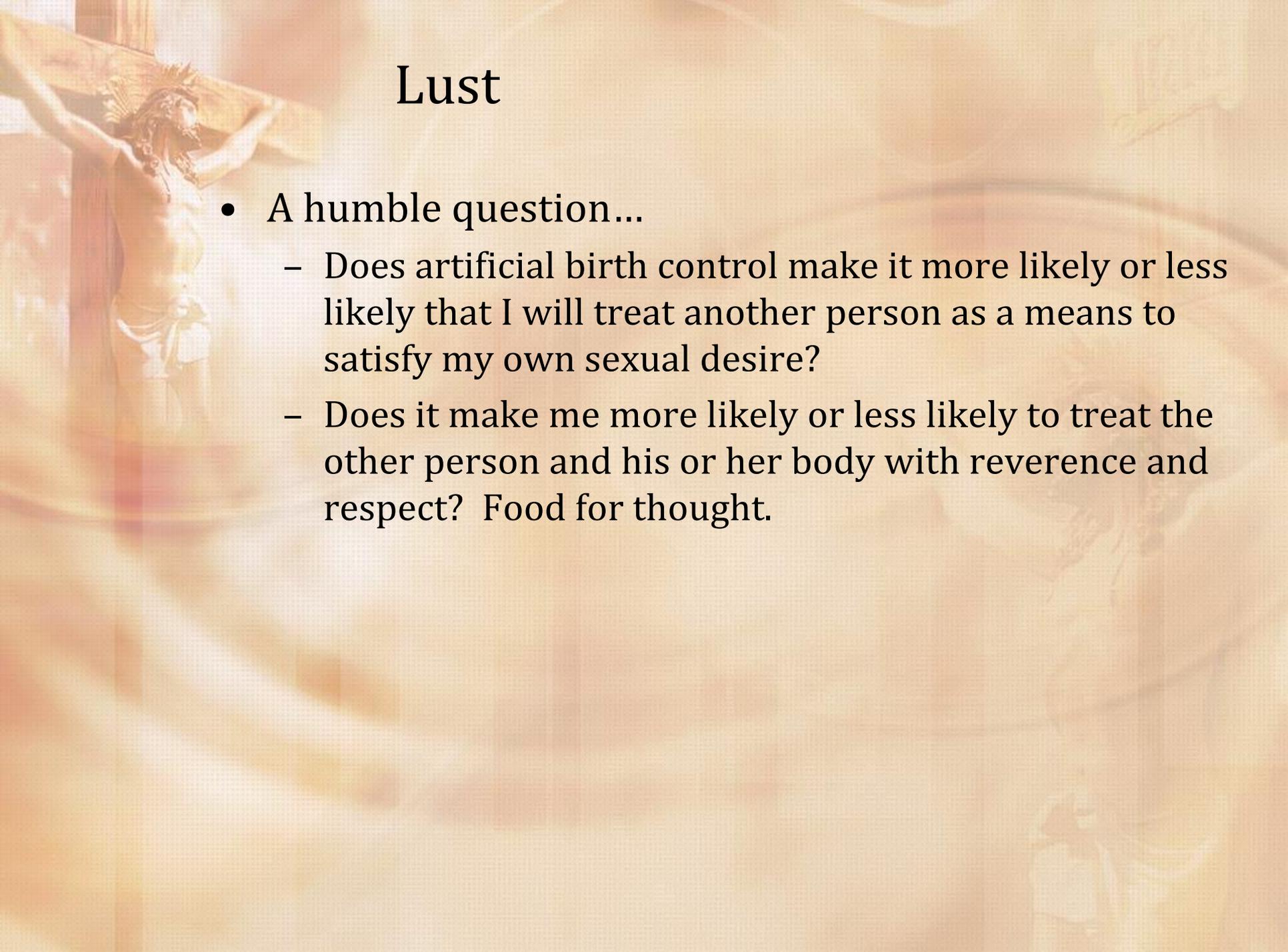


# Lust

- Sexual pleasure is good, some would say it is very good
  - Again, we're Catholics, not Puritans
- It was created by God to be good and pleasurable and to lead to the purposes for which he created it...the procreation of children and the unity of the spouses. (More on this later...)
- Definition of lust
  - Using another human being as a means to satisfy one's own sexual desire
  - The objectification of another human person
  - In any ethical realm, not just the sexual one, using another person as a means to an end is morally objectionable
  - In the realm of faith, it is a deadly sin

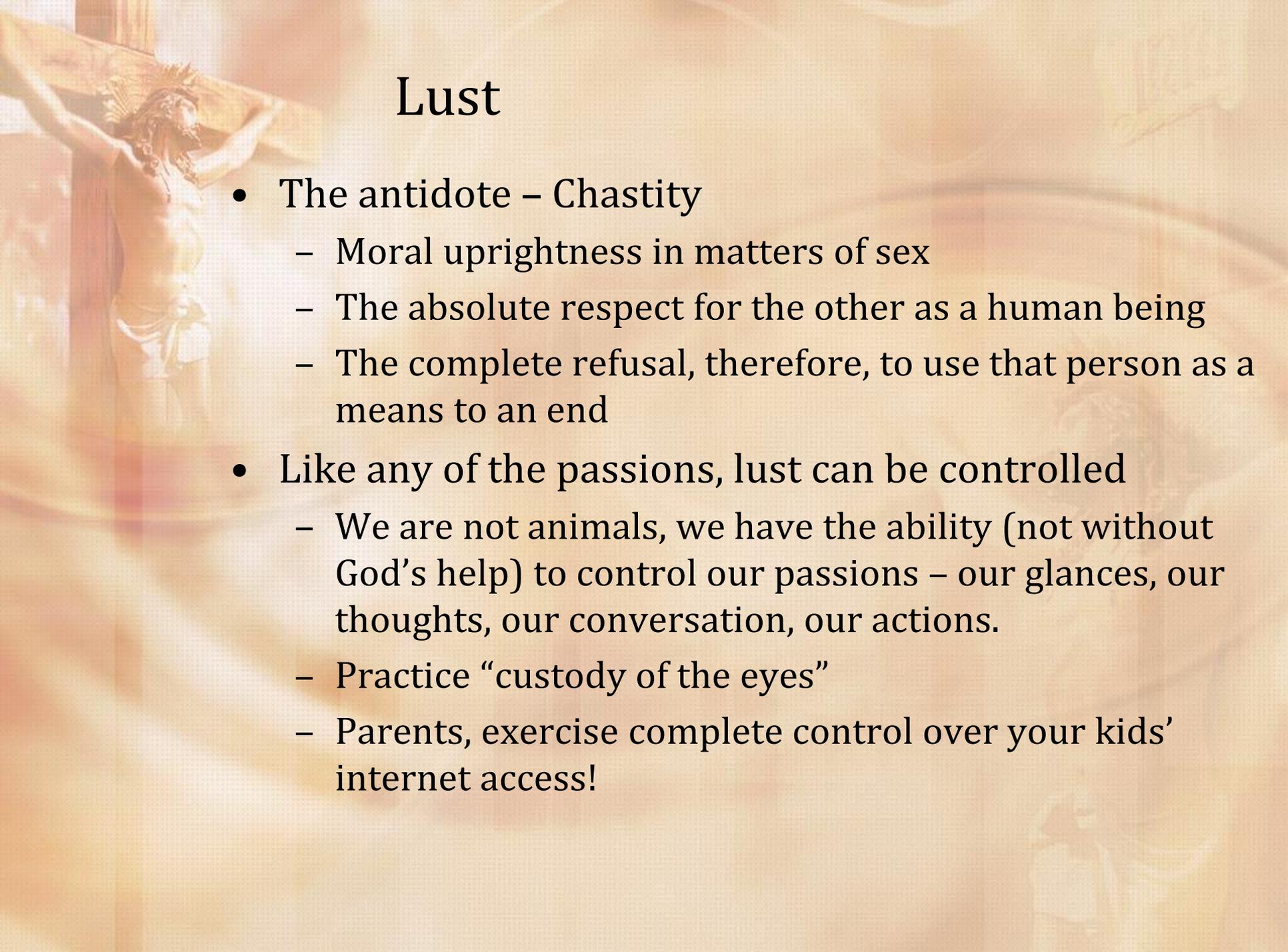
# Lust

- Notice again the focus on the self
  - What I want, what I desire, I don't care about you as a human being, only what I can get from you
  - No openness to the other as another person made in the image and likeness of God and whom I should love
- An addendum to the definition
  - Lust is using another human being as a means to satisfy one's own sexual desire – even if the other person asks you to do so.
  - This is, in essence, what pornography is – the person is 'asking' us to objectify him/her
    - Or are they?



# Lust

- A humble question...
  - Does artificial birth control make it more likely or less likely that I will treat another person as a means to satisfy my own sexual desire?
  - Does it make me more likely or less likely to treat the other person and his or her body with reverence and respect? Food for thought.



# Lust

- The antidote – Chastity
  - Moral uprightness in matters of sex
  - The absolute respect for the other as a human being
  - The complete refusal, therefore, to use that person as a means to an end
- Like any of the passions, lust can be controlled
  - We are not animals, we have the ability (not without God’s help) to control our passions – our glances, our thoughts, our conversation, our actions.
  - Practice “custody of the eyes”
  - Parents, exercise complete control over your kids’ internet access!

# The lustful in Purgatory



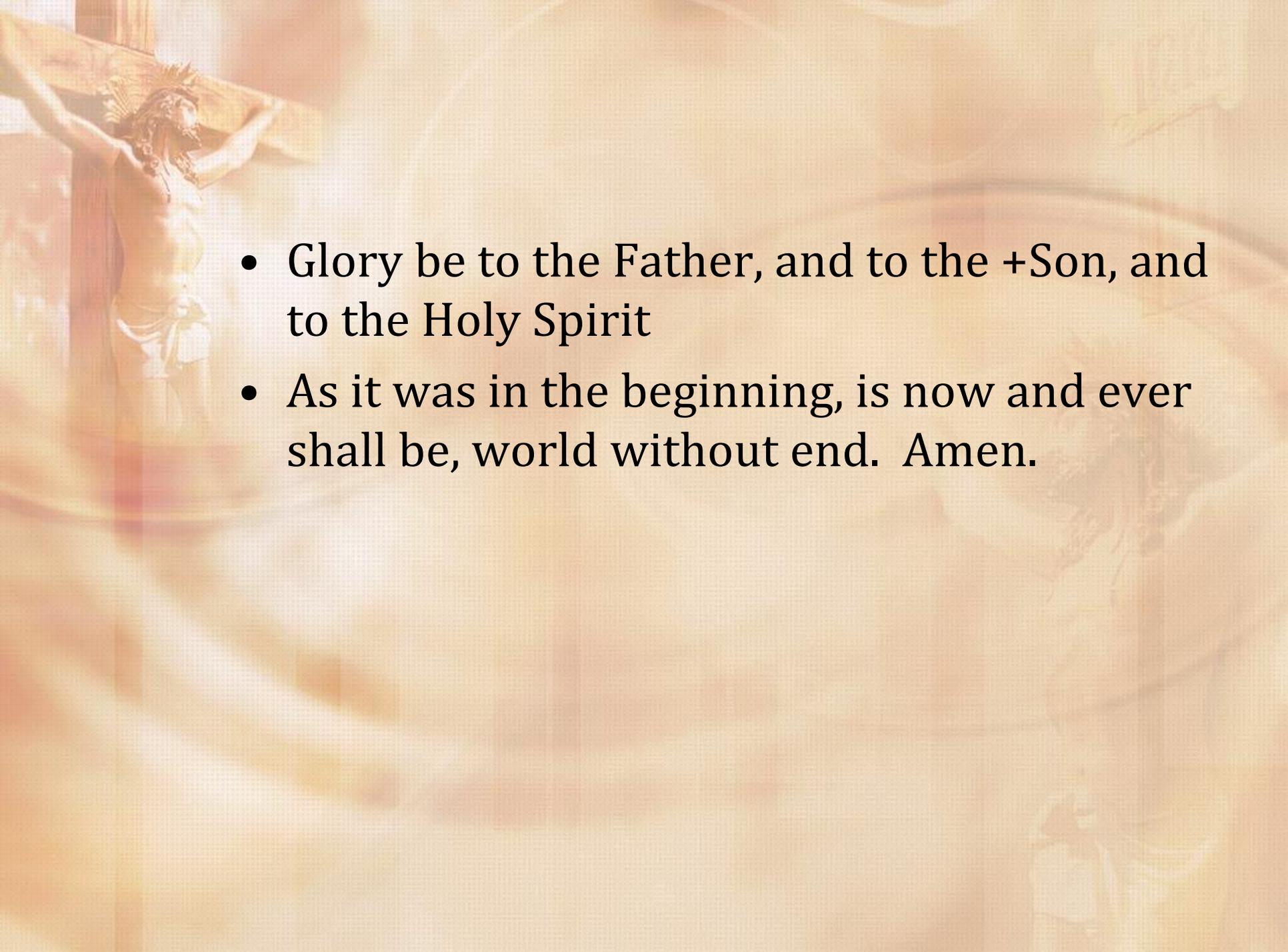
The moment Purgatory ends...





## Next Week (February 8)...

- The Ten Commandments
- Catechumens (non-baptized)
  - Sunday, February 21
    - Rite of Sending - 9:30 a.m. Mass in the Church
    - Rite of Election – 3:00 p.m. at St. Bonaventure
  - BIG DAY – Easter Vigil, April 3 at 8:00 p.m.
- Candidates (already baptized)
  - BIG DAY – Easter Sunday, April 4 at 9:30 a.m.

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- Glory be to the Father, and to the +Son, and to the Holy Spirit
  - As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.