

Fr. Perozich comments —

A few weeks ago I came across Sirius XM radio station 350 called **Red White and Booze**. The songs are about whiskey, beer, drinking, honkytonks, bars, etc. I found it very amusing at how so many songs are created about drinking and drunkenness.

The insight came to me that these are not merely songs, rather that they are **hymns** to a lifestyle in order to escape reality.

Drinking and drunkenness are forms of gluttony which in the article below describe **“three kinds of gluttony: eating before the appointed time, overeating, and desiring delicate foods.”**

I don't have much of a taste or desire for alcohol. If I do have a beer it usually is during Lent with my brother priests who do drink when we are together at dinner and they are grumbling about not being able to imbibe. I tell them that the beer is my penance.

On the other hand, I do not like fixed times for fasting or abstinence from food or sweets when I am obliged **not** to satisfy a craving of the moment: Lent, days before major feasts, ember days, and so on.

My cravings increase when I am told NO!

**“When we do this, we let our bodies control our spirits instead of the other way around. We make our bellies our gods, offering them regular sacrifices to keep them satiated. When we live in slavery to this passion, is it any wonder that we become slaves to all our passions, such as lust, greed, envy, and even idolatry?”**

I have preached frequently on the virtues and corresponding vices because the first person to whom I preach in a homily is ME!

Pride/Humility, Ire/Meekness, Greed/Generosity, Envy/Magnanimity, Sloth/Diligence, Gluttony/Temperance, Chastity/Lust.

Eric Sammons offers a **Reflection**, not defined teaching, in order to help man discipline the body.

Curse you, Eric, for pointing out to me one of my vices. Why could you not speak instead of the vices that I do NOT commit so frequently so that I could feel better about myself! Is that not what the new church is supposed to do for me, make me feel good about me?

After all, am I not now in the church of nice where I come to be affirmed in myself as being created just as I am, and not to hear the harshness and “outdated” teachings of conversion from sin for eternal life?

# 2% Catholics and the Roots of Modern Idolatry

ERIC SAMMONS



**The Pachamama incident at the Vatican in October 2019** was the most egregious case of idolatry anyone has witnessed in a long time. In full view of the whole world, men and women bowed to a literal wooden idol, replacing the Uncreated God with the work of men's hands. However, Pachamama was not a singular case.

While there's the "hard" idolatry like Pachamama making a return after centuries of dormancy in the Western world, there's also the "soft" idolatry prevalent all

around us. We idolize everything from movie stars to sports figures to inanimate objects like our smartphones. We are awash in idolatry. What has caused modern man to become so desperate to make anything other than the Almighty God our god? It begins with something you likely wouldn't suspect: **widespread gluttony.**

**Are you still reading?** If so, you're probably in a minority: gluttony is the ever-pervasive sin we're happy to ignore. How many homilies have you heard against gluttony? How many men's or women's conferences feature talks on gluttony? The only sin less mentioned than artificial birth control in Catholic circles is gluttony. Suggesting that overindulgent eating is a sin can even lead to accusations of "fat shaming" from some corners of society.

Yet the Church Fathers considered gluttony a root sin that led to many others.

St. John Cassian, a Church Father and influential monk of the late 4th and early 5th centuries, wrote that monks (and all Christians) **need to overcome eight vices: gluttony, fornication, avarice, anger, sadness, acedia, vainglory, and pride. The order in which he listed these vices was not arbitrary: he found that conquering one vice was often dependent upon defeating preceding vices in the list, therefore gluttony's place at the head of the list is significant.**

In Cassian's Conference Five, he compares the Christian overcoming vices to the Chosen People overcoming the various inhabitants of the Promised Land.

Only by defeating these enemies could they inhabit the land. Specifically, Cassian compares seven of the eight vices to the seven nations that the Israelites had to defeat. What about the other vice?

Cassian writes that the first vice — **gluttony** — is to be compared to Egypt, from which the Israelites had to escape first, before even traveling to the Promised Land. In other words, if one does not overcome gluttony, he cannot even engage in battle against the other vices! Further, **Cassian describes three kinds of gluttony: eating before the appointed time, overeating, and desiring delicate foods.**

What would Cassian think of the modern men in a society like ours with bulging midsections, consuming rich foods all day, every day? St. Basil the Great, one of the four great doctors of the Eastern Church, further connects gluttony directly to idolatry. In a sermon on fasting, he notes that Moses first fasted before ascending Mount Sinai so that he would be “strong” enough to receive the Ten Commandments (contrary to current conventional wisdom, fasting makes one strong, not weak). Then he says, “But below at its foot, gluttony was the means of leading the people into the worship of idols, and so of polluting them...In one moment of time that people, who had by means of great wonders been taught to worship God, fell headlong through gluttony into the cesspool of Egyptian idolatry.”

**Why was gluttony seen as such a horrible vice, one that leads to more sin, including idolatry? It is because gluttony itself is in a certain sense idolatry, for it**

**puts oneself at the center of existence. I will put my own physical satisfaction above all, I will make my body's desires my idol. Or, as St. Paul put it, for the gluttonous, "their god is the belly" (Philippians 3:19). Gluttony is the first vice to overcome, because eating is the first and most necessary activity for all of us (after breathing, but it is not possible to "overbreathe").**

No society has been more surrounded by food than modern man's. By historical standards, even the poor in America today have far more food available to them than the richest people in the past. Most Americans can access within less than an hour multiple grocery stores with thousands of items of food and dozens of restaurants offering a diverse selection of cuisine.

Obviously such availability is better than starvation, but it's blinded us to one of the most dangerous sins. We satisfy our hunger easily and quickly. We don't think twice about raiding the pantry when we have the slightest rumble in our stomachs. We eat out on a regular basis, taking in foods of which kings and queens of old would have been envious. We consume food from the moment we get up in the morning until the moment our heads hit our pillows at night.

**When we do this, we let our bodies control our spirits instead of the other way around. We make our bellies our gods, offering them regular sacrifices to keep them satiated. When we live in slavery to this passion, is it any wonder that we**

**become slaves to all our passions, such as lust, greed, envy, and even idolatry?**

**A recent situation with the liturgical calendar helped reveal how gluttony pervades our lives.** The Solemnity of the Annunciation (March 25) this year fell on a Friday in Lent. Current Canon Law states that one does not have to abstain from meat on a Solemnity, so the Lenten penance was lifted that day. In and of itself, there's nothing wrong with this canonical hierarchy of goods; after all, feasts are for, well, feasting, not fasting. Yet consider the context.

In the current Catholic calendar, there are only two days of required fasting and only eight days of required abstinence from meat. With Ash Wednesday and Good Friday being days of both fasting and abstinence, this means that only eight out of 365 days—only 2%—of the year require Catholics to even think about what and how much they eat. [We don't even mention fasting anymore in our liturgies.](#)

So while it might be true that it's okay to feast on the Annunciation, is it also okay to treat all of Ordinary Time and even Advent (a penitential season) as times for feasting as well, which is essentially what we do with our regular Western diets?

In order to combat widespread gluttony among us, **Catholics need to restore a more balanced lifestyle of fasting and feasting.** Two percent of the calendar spent controlling our appetites is not balanced. In past ages, all the days of Lent and Advent were seen as days of abstinence and/or fasting, and the vigil days before major

feasts were also for penitence. Such a calendar might seem overwhelmingly strict to many of us today, but that's because we're used to being 2% Catholics.

Our post-Christian world has fallen far from the Christian ideal, and that's why we need to get back to basics. Before we can overcome widespread idolatry (whether "hard" or "soft") within the Church, or the sexual perversion that dominates our culture, or the corruption that infects both Church and State, we need to look to where the Church Fathers would likely point: our stomachs. **Until we can overcome our gluttony, we'll never be able to overcome the other problems that plague us.**

*[Image Credit: Shutterstock]*



By [Eric Sammons](#)

Eric Sammons is the editor-in-chief of *Crisis Magazine*. His most recent book [Deadly Indifference](#) (May 2021) examines the rise of religious indifference and how it has led the Church to lose her missionary zeal.