

# Anger, Wrath, and Meekness

Spiritual Combat 3/5

**What is Anger?** Our emotional reaction to frustration and injustice

It's more common than we think:

- Think how often frustrations and injustices arise in life . . . all the time!
- Same emotion, differing in degree

## *The Spectrum*



Little Frustration / Annoyance ←————→ RAGE

### Is it always bad?

- Anger is be a fitting response to frustration and injustice . . . when it's in proportion and channeled well.
- It can be useful: It can effectively communicate to someone that some good has been violated, and that they need to change or attend to something. It can also provide fuel for worthy movements and change.
- But, it's a powerful emotion, hard to control . . . like a wild beast. Can cause an "Amygdala Hijack".
- When we're angry, we so easily think, say, and do things we normally wouldn't . . . which we will later want to take back. Prevention is the best cure.
- It's easy to get too angry, to become bitter and consumed, to react vs. respond, to become impatient, to express anger inappropriately, to act out of the heat of the moment, and be angry too long, resulting in resentment, unforgiveness, emotional distance, stonewalling, and revenge.
- It's easy to express anger inappropriately either through being "active aggressive" or "passive aggressive".

<b>Active Aggression</b> (unhealthy by excess) Overly Direct Explosion Violence	<b>The Virtuous Mean</b> Honest, even Passionate, but Respectful, Accurate, Charitable, Humble, Kind, Constructive. "Healthy Anger" "Fair Fight"	<b>Passive Aggression</b> (unhealthy by defect) Overly Indirect Implosion Silence
<i>Examples:</i>	<i>Examples:</i>	<i>Examples:</i>

**Anger in Scripture:** "Every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment" (Matthew 5:22). "Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19). "Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Ephesians 4:26). "And he looked at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart" (Mark 3:5). "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32). "Do not be angry with your neighbor for any injury" (Sirach 10:6). "Good sense makes a man slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense" (Proverbs 19:11). "Be not quick to anger, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

# Anger in St. Thomas Aquinas

## The Passion (ST I-II, qq. 46-48)

### Wrath (ST II-II, q. 158)

#### Daughters of Wrath (ST II-II, q. 158, a. 7)

*Thoughts:*

**Indignation** – contempt toward the one at whom you are angry

**Swelling of the Mind** – what happens to us interiorly when we get angry

*Words:*

**Clamor** – disorderly and confused speech

**Contumely** – insults against another

**Blasphemy** – insults against God

*Actions:*

**Quarreling** – all manner of injuries inflicted on others

#### Contrary Virtues: Clemency & Meekness (ST II-II, q. 157)

*Clemency* (see Seneca's *De Clementia*)

*Meekness*

*Patience*

### *Other Helps in Dealing with Anger*

- Wait: Realize that you're not in a place to act and react well.
- Take breaths. Let yourself calm down.
- Wait until you gain control.
- Virtue found in between the stimulus and the response.
- Step back and get some perspective. Give yourself time to think it through.
- Examine yourself: Are you overreacting, or tempted to overreact? Are you taking something too personally? Are you interpreting things correctly? Do you have all the facts? Could there be another way of interpreting the situation? Are you reacting to a present problem, or to a past event through a present trigger?
- Pray. Believe in Divine Providence. Remember Jesus. Ask for His help.
- Seek to Respond vs. React. You'll regret less, and need to apologize and take back less.
- Always think: The situation is what it is. How can I make the best out of it?