

to fast only from food, that is, from the sin of gluttony, but thou must fast also from all the seven mortal sins.

Then he advocates almsgiving:

And almsgiving consisteth not only in giving money, or bread or shelter for God's sake, but there is also great charity in supporting widows and children and orphans, in making peace, in taking men out of prison. And these are things which wipe out sin, having with them confession and repentance.

Take heed that thou givest offence to none; nevertheless, if thou dost give offence, see that thou dost not show thyself glad because of that which thou hast done, nor of that which thy son or thy kinsman hath done, because those persons may forget the hurt done unto them, but they will never forget the gladness thou didst show over it, and it will prevent every chance of reconciliation.

He bids his readers overcome "the sin of envy, by thinking of those who are worse off in this world, some because of greater poverty, some because of more sickness, some because they have fewer kindred, some by reason of less understanding, and some because they are in a lower position." The sins of luxury and gluttony are to be similarly avoided, but of all vices the worst is pride, because from that "descend all the others." Whilst on this subject it occurs to him "to give a good example."

Compare this life of ours unto a great cask of wine; there cometh one every day for a cup of wine, and he poureth in a cup of water in place of the wine he hath taken out; and this he doth until the cask, which at first was full of good wine, becomes full of water. And thus do we little by little lose our natural heat, and in time become feeble and die of ourselves without any other cause; and there can help thee neither money, nor kindred, nor friends, nor powers, nor good eating, nor any other worldly thing; wherefore mayest thou see how this our pride doth wax feeble of its own self!

Not less severe is Paolo against those who will not forgive injury and meditate revenge—

because thou canst hardly ever carry out thy vengeance entirely; thou dost either too much or too little; if thou dost too much thou offendest thine enemy and he hateth thee, and people speak of it and say that thou hast acted badly; and if thou dost too little the people say, "He had done better not to have put himself to the proof than to have done it to his shame." So that thou must always be the one who pardoneth if thou wouldst be the victor.