



## Augustine & Disordered Loves

At age 19, Augustine Aurelius – later to be known as Augustine of Hippo – read a dialogue by the Roman philosopher Cicero in which Cicero stated that every person sets out to be happy, but the majority are thoroughly wretched. Truly, no one dreams as a child of one day growing up to be miserable, and yet many people’s lives are characterized by conflict, frustration and unfulfilled longings. Augustine set out to discover why it is that most people are so discontented in life. His conclusion was that for most of us, our lives are “out of order”; we have disordered loves.

Augustine was convinced that what defines a person more than anything is what they love. He said that when we ask if someone is a “good” person, what we are asking is not what they believe or what they hope for, but rather what they love. He stated that what we consider human virtues, e.g. courage, honesty, etc. are essentially forms of love. Courage is loving your neighbor’s well-being more than your own safety. Honesty is loving someone enough to tell them the truth even if it may put you at a disadvantage.

Sin, Augustine said, is ultimately a lack of love, either for God or for your neighbor. He famously stated that “The essence of sin is disordered love.” Disordered loves means that we often love less-important things more, and more-important things less than we ought to, and this wrong prioritization leads to unhappiness and disorder in our lives.

This is essentially what James says in his epistle:

*What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you*

*do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. (James 4:1-3)*

James is saying that what makes people miserable is not their circumstances, but that they are chasing after the wrong things, for the wrong reasons. The things they love are out of order.

Many times, we view people as a means to an end, using them rather than loving them. Oftentimes we seek God primarily because we find him useful, rather than seeking him because we find him beautiful. We relate to him as useful to us, to help us achieve our selfish goals, rather than seeking his agenda for our lives. The problem, James tells us, is even bigger than we might have thought... because not only does this kind of disordered love lead to misery, it actually pits us at odds with God.

*Therefore, it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6)* Thankfully, James doesn't just show us the problem, he also points us to the solution. If we proudly seek our own agenda, we will find ourselves in opposition with God. However, if we humble ourselves before God, we will receive grace. James goes on to tell us that if you humble yourself before the Lord, he will exalt you. (James 4:10)

The way out of misery and into joy begins with humbling ourselves before God and submitting our lives – and our loves – to him.

In a world consumed by chaos, confusion, and misplaced priorities, the concept of *Ordo Amoris*—the right ordering of love—has never been more critical. St. Augustine, one of the greatest minds in Church history, taught that virtue itself is nothing more than properly ordered love. When a man understands *Ordo Amoris*, he places God first, loves his family as he should, and rightly orders all things according to their true value. Without this we are violating natural law and things begin to transform into ways they ought not to be.

But today, love is disordered. People love power, pleasure, and self-gratification more than truth, sacrifice, and God. And as a result, we are witnessing the collapse of families, the rise of weak men, and a society in moral decay. If we do not correct this disorder, we will suffer the consequences—not only in this life but in eternity.

[nickcady.org](http://nickcady.org)

## **Ordo Amoris - A Christian Principle Or An Excuse to Forgo Our Fellow Man?**

### **What is Ordo Amoris?**

Ordo Amoris, at its core, is about loving the right things in the right way. St. Thomas Aquinas built on St. Augustine's teachings, explaining that love must be directed toward its proper end: God. The hierarchy of love should be as follows:

**God Above All** – The first and greatest commandment: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength* (Matthew 22:37).

**Love of Self in Relation to God** - We are called to holiness, not selfishness.

**Love of Neighbor** - This includes our families, friends, and all whom God places in our lives.

**Love of Material Goods in Their Proper Place** - Money, possessions, status—these are tools, not ends in themselves.

When love is rightly ordered, a man finds purpose, peace, and strength. When it is disordered, he falls into confusion, sin, and weakness.

A more practical and realistic ordering of items in a man's life could be something such as this:

1. God
2. Self
3. Wife
4. Children
5. Neighbors
6. Community/Church
7. County/State
8. Country
9. Country's Allies

### **Disordered Love in Today's World**

Disorder is the rule of our age. Modern men are told to “follow their hearts,” but Scripture warns us: *The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick* (Jeremiah 17:9). Men today chase:

- Careers over their families.
- Pleasure over responsibility.
- Political ideology over objective truth.
- Comfort over sacrifice.

One beautiful point that this drives home is the hierarchy of values. Being a Catholic convert myself, Catholicism just makes sense. There is order. There is structure. It is logical. A sin is not just a sin. There is a hierarchy to it. Is murder the same as gossip? Not so much. Should we love our neighbor more than we love our wife? I would certainly hope not. If so, you are actually violating the natural law and committing a sin. It is an act of injustice.

We see the effects of this disordered love everywhere:

- Fatherlessness.
- Pornography addiction.
- A culture obsessed with self-expression rather than self-denial.
- Men who are physically strong but spiritually weak.

Weak men make weak families. Weak families make weak societies. And at the heart of it all is disordered love.

### **Restoring Ordo Amoris in Your Life**

If you are serious about living as a man of God, you must take action today. Here's how:

#### Put God First

- Pray daily.
- Read Scripture.
- Go to Mass and Confession regularly.
- Lead your family in faith.

#### Fulfill Your Duties as a Man

- If you are married, love your wife through action, not just words.
- If you have children, raise them in virtue and faith.
- If you are single, prepare yourself for your future vocation.

#### Detach from Worldly Idols

- Examine your life. What takes priority? Sports? Social media? Work? If anything comes before God, reorder it.
- Cut out sin ruthlessly. Lust, greed, pride—these destroy your soul.
- Choose discipline over comfort. Be a man of action, not passivity.

<https://www.themanlycatholic.com/>

