

MY BATTLE PLAN AGAINST SIN

Man is body and soul. Victory over any habitual sin (big or small), therefore, will involve efforts made on the part of the body *and* the soul. On the part of the **SOUL** we must work at these things...

1. **SORROW FOR SINS.** The more sorry we are for our sins, the more we will not want to repeat them. Thus, we must enter into ourselves and conceive a horror for sin and we will break free of them. Sin is ugly and gives the devil a place in our lives. Mortal sin destroys grace in our souls, closes the door to heaven while opening a way for us into hell. Sin serves the enemies of the Church and our souls. Worst of all, mortal sin crucifies Our Blessed Lord anew (cf. Heb 6:6). Stop and think where we would be now if we had died in our sins. Think of how God sees all things and is watching us. He has the power to take away our lives as He did to Onan, who died in an act of impurity (cf. Gen 38:10), or Ananias and Sapphira, who died in the act of lying to the Apostles (cf. Acts 5). The Fathers of the Church hold that these souls were damned. Thus, make an act of sorrow and pray for the grace of compunction, asking the Mother of Sorrows and St. Mary Magdalene to assist you. Tell God that you are sorry for having offended Him and having deserved hell for your sins.

grant me the grace to *desire* purity, to *love* purity, to *embrace* purity” followed by three *Hail Marys*. King David prayed after his sin with Bathsheba: **“Create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right spirit within my bowels”** (Ps. 50:12). It is very important that we pray for graces to obtain the **DESIRE** to overcome our sins because, let’s face it, we usually like our sins, at least in a fleshy sort of way. This is precisely why such sins have become *habitual* sins. We must combat such carnal desires with elevated desires of the will moved by grace. This can also be accomplished by praying to *abhor* the sin or vice as St. Paul advises: **“Hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good”** (Rom. 12:9). For instance, one could pray: “Lord, grant me grace to *hate*, to *detest* and to *avoid* all sins of impurity” followed by three *Hail Marys*. This should be done upon rising and before retiring. When assailed by temptation have instant recourse to God, crying out, “My Jesus, have mercy!” or some other such prayer. Meditation on the last four things (death, judgment, heaven and hell) or the Passion of Our Blessed Lord for at least 10-15 minutes every morning and evening is indispensable for overcoming temptation. Never forget that **one of the most powerful of all prayers for overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil is the Rosary prayed daily in a devout manner, especially in front of the Blessed Sacrament.**
2. **FREQUENT THE SACRAMENTS.**
 - (a) **CONFESSION.** Confession is not only for the *removal* of sins but also for *prevention* of sins. We must not wait until we fall again to return to Confession, but rather go frequently to receive the graces needed to prevent future falls. Frequency of confession will depend on the nature of the sin and where the combatant is in regard to his struggle with the sin. Thus, one might go twice a month, once a week, or even more frequently at times. Find a priest who will work with you.
 - (b) **COMMUNION.** St. John Cassian (5th Century), taught: **“When [the Eucharist] is received by a person, it burns out, as it were, by a kind of fire, the spirit that occupies his members and that is trying to hide in them, and it flees. ...[But] the enemy will revile the one whom he is besieging all the more when he sees him cut off from the heavenly medicine, and the more he thinks he is removed from the Spiritual remedy the more fearlessly and frequently he will make trial of him.”** We can take advantage of the Eucharist in three ways: (i) attendance at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, (ii) worthy reception of Holy Communion, (iii) adoration of the Eucharist outside of Mass. The more frequently these are used, the better.
3. **PRAYER.** Christ plainly teaches: **“apart from me you can do nothing”** (John 5:15). We must pray for grace to overcome our sins. For example, in the struggle against sins of impurity, one might pray:

grant me the grace to *desire* purity, to *love* purity, to *embrace* purity” followed by three *Hail Marys*. King David prayed after his sin with Bathsheba: **“Create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right spirit within my bowels”** (Ps. 50:12). It is very important that we pray for graces to obtain the **DESIRE** to overcome our sins because, let’s face it, we usually like our sins, at least in a fleshy sort of way. This is precisely why such sins have become *habitual* sins. We must combat such carnal desires with elevated desires of the will moved by grace. This can also be accomplished by praying to *abhor* the sin or vice as St. Paul advises: **“Hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good”** (Rom. 12:9). For instance, one could pray: “Lord, grant me grace to *hate*, to *detest* and to *avoid* all sins of impurity” followed by three *Hail Marys*. This should be done upon rising and before retiring. When assailed by temptation have instant recourse to God, crying out, “My Jesus, have mercy!” or some other such prayer. Meditation on the last four things (death, judgment, heaven and hell) or the Passion of Our Blessed Lord for at least 10-15 minutes every morning and evening is indispensable for overcoming temptation. Never forget that **one of the most powerful of all prayers for overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil is the Rosary prayed daily in a devout manner, especially in front of the Blessed Sacrament.**
4. **CONSECRATION TO JESUS LIVING IN MARY.** The Blessed Virgin has been assigned by God to crush the head of Satan and has done so again and again in many ways throughout history. She wants to do this in our lives too. After all, we are her offspring through the waters of Baptism (cf. John 19:26-27; Apoc. 12:17). Consecration to Jesus living in Mary will allow her to crush the head of Satan in our lives. At Fatima, Our Lady asks us to consecrate ourselves to her Immaculate Heart.
5. **OVERCOME RESENTMENTS.** Resentments fuel our self-pity which in turn seeks an outlet in some self-indulgence. We want to feel good about ourselves. Resentments are bitter memories of some unjust thing that has happened to us. Most habitual sins have a resentment lurking behind them. We can conquer these bitter memories by attending Holy Mass and begging the Lord at the time of the Consecration to remove them and to grant us the grace to forgive. We can also pray for the grace to love those toward whom we bear the resentment, saying daily, “Lord, help me love so and so” followed by a *Hail Mary*. Having frequent recourse to this supernatural love will eventually dissolve the resentment and we will be free.

6. **FRIENDSHIP.** Recovery from habitual sin, especially big ones, is going to occur in relationships with people who themselves have found spiritual maturity. We need friends to spur us on to victory over sin. Develop healthy friendships. Find those of sound moral character and solid faith. Such people will act as an inspiration for doing good (the opposite of an occasion of sin). You will most likely meet them through your parish and its activities.
7. **STUDY.** King David says in the Psalms: **“Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee”** (Ps. 118:11). We need to study and read good books to fill our hearts with good things. This will also provide understanding as to why it’s better to be a man of spirit than a man of the world. This also helps replace bad memories. *Live as if you will die tomorrow, study as if you will live forever.*
8. **SACRAMENTALS.** Using the Sacramentals that God has provided can be very helpful. Some examples: wearing the Brown Scapular and the Miraculous Medal); sprinkling of Holy Water; using blessed salt; placing St. Benedict medals in our houses and cars; having our homes blessed and so on...

On the part of the **BODY** we must...

1. **OVERCOME TEMPTATION.**

- (a) **MORTIFICATION.** St. Augustine says: **“The man who lets himself do everything that is allowed will very soon become slack and do what is not allowed.”** We must learn to say “no” to ourselves in little things so that we can say “NO” to ourselves when the big things come along. The best place to practice saying “no” to ourselves is at the table, (this is especially helpful for overcoming impurity since the appetite for eating is linked to the appetite for sexual pleasure). Some examples: we could say *no* to butter on our bread, *no* to soda, *no* to dessert and so on. Practice saying *no* to something at every meal to gain self-mastery. Another important place to say *no* to ourselves is in the use of technology. Stop watching TV, movies, listening to modern music and playing video games. All of these produce a certain pleasure in the soul that weakens the will such that it finds it difficult to say *NO* to illegitimate pleasures. We could also blast ourselves with cold water in the shower to let our body know who is really in charge, keeping in mind the saying of St. Paul: **“I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection”** (1Cor. 9:27). Thus, let us strive to eat and drink temperately, practice custody of the eyes, always dress modestly and refrain from speaking anything indecent. Pray and work to love your soul more than your body.
- (b) **OCCASIONS OF SIN.** The desert fathers wrote: **“Whatever may disturb the purity and tranquility of our mind, however useful and necessary it may appear, must be avoided as harmful.”** Things that

lead us to sin must be avoided as much as possible. If someone has a drinking problem, having booze around is not going to help him. Such occasions of sin must be disposed of almost without thinking too much about them. Dump it down the drain! Destroy it quickly! Many occasions of sin are found in... music, movies, T.V., internet, being alone on the computer, meeting so and so alone, going to a night club... and so on. If we have fallen once before due to some circumstance of place or time, let’s not repeat it. Remember Our Lord’s words: **“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell”** (Matt. 5:29-30).

- (c) **DEATH RATHER THAN SIN.** Many of the saints died rather than sin (cf. Heb 12:4). They are the martyrs. When temptations grow strong, we can imitate them by saying to ourselves: “I would rather die than sin.” If the temptation will not go away, consider *how* you would rather die and what such a death might be like... death by drowning, burning, etc... this often works to distract the mind and give it the perspective it needs to overcome the temptation.
2. **AVOID IDLENESS.** On Good Friday Christ gave His all, and this act is the most meaningful event of all history. Thus, the more we give of ourselves, the more meaning we will find in life. On the other hand, the more selfish we are with our time and energy the more likely we will turn to sin due to boredom, curiosity and self-love. St. Camillus de Lellis was a habitual gambler who overcame himself only after completely dedicating his time and energy to the building of a local monastery. He realized that if he were working for someone else, he would have no time for himself and his passion for gambling. He slowly gained the victory that ultimately led to his becoming a great saint. Let us, then, seek opportunities to give alms and perform the various corporal and spiritual works of mercy.
3. **RISING.** How we start something often determines how it will end. Start the day well and it will end well. Rise immediately upon hearing the sound of the alarm, make the Sign of the Cross, saying “for the Glory of God and the salvation of souls!” Get rid of snooze alarm clocks. Such devices just teach us to procrastinate. Let your body know who is boss!
4. **EXERCISE.** Always include some form of exercise for the body. Daily workouts, however brief, are especially helpful for those who are suffering from sins of impurity. At the very minimum perform some calisthenics every morning.

WITH THIS BATTLE PLAN, WE HAVE WHAT IS NEEDED TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT!