

On Breaking the Power of Pornography III

6. Learn to discern and combat spiritual attacks.

- a. Sexual vices and pornography open one up to the influence of evil spirits. Before a spiritual attack begins, you might be struggling with your flesh, such as trying to fight off a lustful thought. A spiritual attack begins when a spirit silently intrudes into your mind, adding intensity to your lustful thoughts, or implanting additional ones. You will be able to detect this when an ordinary human lust arises, and then suddenly erupts into a life of its own, one that seems nearly impossible to throw out.
- b. When this happens, you will not be able to shake the thought with mental effort alone. This calls for prayer. Pray to your guardian angel and to St. Michael the Archangel, even adding, “All you angels of God, protect and save me!”
- c. One of the hardest parts in fending off spiritual attacks is learning to recognize one when it is happening. These occur with all the vices, not just lust. Since these attacks are covert operations which need to be disguised in order to be successful, you need to pray each day for the gift of continual discernment. After the spiritual attack is finished, your mental disciplines will still be needed to control your thoughts.
- d. For the control of thoughts, remember that you must flee from temptations against the flesh. You cannot stand your ground and look or listen to the suggestion of lust. Instead, have a place to go in the imagination when such thoughts come along. It might be in the arms of your wife, or playing with your children, or fishing, or playing softball, or visiting the scene of the Nativity. But have some place to go which is good, true and beautiful.
- e. Lastly for this combat, enlist material things in the fight. Start the day with proper underwear, and modest clothes. Be enrolled in the Brown Scapular, and have next to your skin not only the Scapular, but blessed medals of Our Lady (I recommend the Miraculous Medal), St. Michael, and your patron saint. Also, have a blessed Rosary in your possession at all times. When you are fighting evil thoughts, put your hand on the Rosary and feel the crucifix. Keep some holy water with you in the car, at your home, and take it with you on business trips, sprinkling it around the motel room when you enter, and having it by your beside in case of spiritual attacks which will seek to use the television against your soul. Also place a sacred image in that room.

7. Avail yourself of grace.

- a. The sacraments—especially the Holy Eucharist—are rivers of living water (grace) that will bring fresh strength to your soul. St. Thomas Aquinas pointed out that the reason we need our daily bread is because spiritual combat is so fierce at times. If we worthily receive communion in the morning, then we will heal the wear and tear to the soul from the day before,

and receive strength for the day ahead. Amongst its many effects, Holy Communion takes away all venial sin, frees us from daily faults, preserves our soul from mortal sin, and will lessen concupiscence (those disordered appetites or desires which produce an inclination to sin). “The Holy Eucharist restrains and represses the lusts of the flesh, for while it inflames the soul more ardently with the fire of charity, it of necessity extinguishes the ardor of concupiscence.” (Catechism of the Council of Trent)

- b. Notice the connection between the growth of real love and the decrease of lust. “The increase of charity is the lessening of concupiscence.” (St Augustine) Increased acts of charity to your wife, your children, your neighbors, your extended family or brethren in the parish, will all serve to decrease concupiscence. I used to volunteer at a rest home (a real misnomer at the place I worked) when I was in college. Cleaning up the elderly after they had soiled themselves, with respect and good cheer, worked wonders to keep me on the straight and narrow.

8. Both vices and virtues are strengthened by practice.

- a. The vice of pornography is never static. It either grows, or it is diminished. But you cannot maintain a particular level. Just looking at a little of it will tempt you mightily to go searching for images and descriptions which are more and more graphic. The conscience in this development becomes desensitized. The use of pornography will not *make* a man act these things out, but it will lower or remove his inhibitions to do so. This is why many marriages are failing because of pornography—the desire of the man for his wife to do things which are more and more degrading. “The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church)
- b. If you are viewing pornography, then your vices have been strengthened by repeated practice, and your virtues of chastity and purity have been severely weakened. It will take time, but the more you practice virtue, the easier it becomes. If you can persevere for a time in chastity, you will find that your hope in perseverance and the strength for it will grow, thus adding to your joy.
- c. “We do not lose heart...our inner man is being renewed every day.” (2 Cor. 4.16) The more you break with your vice, the easier it will be to overcome it. But realize that it will take time, perseverance, and effort.

“For as you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity, unto iniquity: so now yield your members to serve justice, unto sanctification.” (Rom. 6.19)