

## Keeping the Mass, II

ty begin to wane. Once the object in the imagination is changed, any passions associated with the object will likewise change or dissipate. Moreover, the lower faculties learn that they are not to think about or become fixed on those objects. As time goes on, we will notice that when the object comes into the imagination, the passions and other faculties wait until the will gives consent because they will be habituated not to move right away.

In other words, if we suffer from the desire of lust, we can switch it to desiring or engaging in the object of a hobby we enjoy, such as fishing. Later in striving for virtue, it will become easier to switch the thoughts to something other than that which appeases the appetites because of the virtue slowly built up in the various faculties. That is why some find it easier to think about fishing than to pray. Even though prayer on a supernatural level is clearly more efficacious, nevertheless, grace builds on nature and so sometimes the natural means are easier, at least initially.

The next observation has to do with performing what is called a self-exorcism. Christ showed us by His example when He said: "Get thee behind me Satan." (Mt. 16:23) When we experience some temptation, whether it is from the devil or not, we can turn on the devil and say Christ's words or some similar words. Since we have a limited dominion over our bodies, we can exercise our rights to take control of them and kick the demonic out. There is the case of extraordinary demonic activity of course, but ordinarily this ability serves four functions:

The first is to attack the devil directly by throwing him out and taking back dominion over our bodies. The devil is a coward; if we have sanctifying grace in our souls,

our attack has a supernatural efficacy, which the devil cannot resist.

Second, this form of attack switches the imagination to attacking the devil which takes the image of temptation out of our minds.

Third, it habituates the lower faculties to do the same. Those who employ this method will find that, over time, the lower faculties will become uncooperative with the demonic, particularly the cogitative power. If it associates the temptation with the rejection which the person does habitually, when the temptation comes and the person is not fully aware, the cogitative power will react against the temptation and, in effect, hold off and warn the person.

Finally, the last function it performs is to habituate the faculties even if Satan is not the one tempting. This will cause the demonic to stop attacking in this manner for fear of defeat.

We have a choice. Either we fight temptation or succumb to it. There is no middle ground. The one in the habit of succumbing, will not be able to defend the Mass as he should.

To defend the Mass, and to keep it, we must fight temptation.

Once temptations begin, they must be dealt with swiftly. If against the faith or purity, we must flee. I tried to cover this in the inserts on Gaining and Keeping Purity, but all other temptations must be fought as well.

Since the lower faculties await the judgment of reason and the motion of the will, even though they may have initial motion from the presence of the object in the imagination, nevertheless, they refrain somewhat until the will consents. It's like they are waiting for the reason and the will to make a decision. If the will hesitates, the lower faculties perceive that it is permissible to continue in the object. From this can arise a stronger binding of reason since the faculties will incline more. Moreover, we must never give consent, because even if later we decide to overthrow the temptation, it will be harder since the reason and choice will be bound by virtue of lower faculties holding the soul captive. That's a rather Thomistic way of saying that unless we do something about them, the temptations overcome.

Next, we must act energetically by not allowing regret (at the thought of losing pleasure) or attachment to the object to stop our reason and will. We must do so perseveringly, being willing to overthrow the temptation each and every time it comes into our mind. We must make resolutions of will often so that each time a temptation comes into our imagination, we will reject it, and if we make these resolutions repeatedly, he will have a habituation in our will which will strengthen it so that when the time comes it is easier for us to reject the temptation. This is one tough struggle. We might have to reject a single

temptation over and over again all day long. Whew!

Fr. Jordan Aumann, O.P. , wrote an excellent book called Spiritual Theology. In it he wrote:

During temptation the conduct of the soul can be summarized in one important word: **resist**. It does not suffice merely to remain passive in the face of temptation; positive resistance is that which faces up to the temptation itself and conquers it by doing the precise opposite from that which is suggested. For example, to begin to speak well of a person when we are tempted to criticize him, to give a generous alms when our selfishness would prompt us to refuse, to prolong our prayer when the devil suggests that we shorten it or abandon it altogether. Direct resistance can be used against any kind of temptation, except those of faith or purity, as we shall see now. Indirect resistance does not attack the temptation but withdraws from it by distracting the mind to some other object that is completely distinct. This is the type of resistance to be used in temptations against the faith or against purity, because in these cases a direct attack would very likely increase the intensity of the temptation itself. The best practice in these cases is a rapid but calm practice of a mental exercise that will absorb our internal faculties, especially the memory and imagination, and withdraw them from the object of the temptation. It is also helpful to have some hobby or pastime or activity that is interesting enough to absorb one's attention for the moment.

If then we can switch our thoughts, even for a short time, to something we enjoy that is morally licit – or switch to praying – we will find over the course of time the temptations and passions associated with impuri-