

On Gaining and Keeping Purity, XIV

priest. Jesus warns us that we will be judged on all of the words that issue from our mouths.

7. **Constant Vigilance**—especially of the eyes. The Ignatian daily examen is key. This superb practice invites us to rewind the film of our day and see where God has been present and give thanks, but also to see where our hearts have wandered from our loving God. This we can easily apply to the virtue of purity. In prayer and reflection, observe and humbly admit when our eyes, mind, affections, and heart start to wander from God and start to toy with what is not of God—that of impurity.

8. **Confession & Renewed Hope.** Human weakness does prevail over us and we can all fall. Worst of all, above and beyond the fall into any sin, is that of despair. The gravest fault of Judas was not his betrayal of Jesus, but his despair and failing to trust in the infinite mercy of Jesus. This being the case, we should never despair due to our human inclinations prone to sin and our sin itself. On the contrary. Saint Paul offers us these encouraging words: “Where weakness abounds the grace of God abounds all the more.” The great Saint Augustine, who lived a life of slavery to lust and impurity into his early thirties, preaches the doctrine of “O happy fault”. God can allow an evil to bring even greater good out of it. Therefore, if we have the misfortune of falling into a sin against purity then we should have a boundless trust in God and have immediate recourse to the Sacrament of His mercy, the Sacrament of Confession. And let us relish words of the prophet Isaiah: “Though your sins be like scarlet they will become as white as snow.” (Is. 1:18)

9. **Frequent Holy Communion.** Of the greatest importance in safeguarding the virtue of chastity is our relation to Jesus in the most Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is really, truly, and substantially the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus, the Son of the living God. When we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, we receive all of the following—His totality! We receive the mind

of Jesus, with His memory that purifies our possibly dirty thoughts. We receive Jesus’ Blood that circulates through our entire body, rushing through our veins and arteries. We receive the most Sacred Heart of Jesus with His most noble of sentiments; even more, we receive the absolute purity of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Frequent and fervent and a passionate reception of Holy Communion is by far the most efficacious means to live a life of purity—It is Jesus Himself that takes possession of our entire lives and being!

10. **Our Lady:** Our model and intercessor for all virtues. Of course it would be far from complete, our treatise on the virtue of purity, if we did not invite Our Lady, the Mother of holy and pure love to be with us, pray for us, and intercede on our behalf. Experience shows in the lives of countless saints that it is through their great love of God and filial trust and love for Mary, that they can live holy lives and lives of great purity.

Saint Faustina Kowalska had an encounter with the Lord Jesus. He drew close to the saint and wrapped a golden sash around her waist. This symbolized a gift that He generously bestowed upon the saint—the gift of perfect chastity. Her flesh would be totally submissive to her mind and spirit and no longer would she experience indecent thoughts. Jesus would be the center of her life, her all and all. However, there is an additional very important note. Saint Faustina said that she had been begging Our Lady for this gift for a long time. Therefore, it was through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that Saint Faustina acquired this marvelous gift of perfect chastity. Let us all turn to the most pure and Immaculate Heart of Mary and beg for purity of mind, heart, body, soul and even intention. Let us beg Mary most Holy for the grace to live out this sublime Beatitude that Jesus taught us: “Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see God.” (Mt. 5:8) Let us live out purity in this life so as to contemplate the beauty of the Blessed Trinity—with Our Lady, the angels and saints—for all eternity. Amen.

To conclude this series of inserts, let's review what should be in every parishioner's plan who seeks to achieve purity and keep it:

1. **Prayer.** We are very weak. Jesus reminded the Apostles as well as the whole world in the Garden of Gethsemane with these precise words: “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Pray that you will not enter in the test.” (Mt 26:40-41) Instead of praying, the Apostles fell asleep and thereby failed the Lord. The principal reason for falling into any sin, but especially that of impurity, is either lack of prayer or a very weak and anemic prayer. The Israelites were able to defeat their enemies only after Moses perched on the top of the hill, overlooking the battle field, lifted his arms to heaven. (Exodus 17:8-13) To conquer the imperious demands of the flesh and the constant insinuations of the world and the temptations of the devil, we must (like Moses) lift up our arms constantly in prayer. Jesus invites us with these words: “Ask and you will receive...” (Mt. 7:7). Let us beg the Lord for the gift and virtue of purity.

2. **Don't play with fire.** A key reason why many fall into sins of impurity is a failure to avoid the near occasion of sin. Proverbs are not lacking: “He who plays with fire will get burnt”... and “He who walks on thin ice will fall in...” A simple example; A boyfriend and girlfriend, after having a nice meal together, the boyfriend invites his girlfriend to his condo to pray the Rosary together. No! They will both forget their Rosaries and fall prey to the temptations of the devil and demands of the flesh.

3. **Modesty.** The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that modesty is the guardian of the virtue purity. (CCC # 2521-2524) All must practice modesty. Through Baptism our bodies become temples of the Holy Ghost, still more, temples of the Blessed Trinity and after Holy Communion living Tabernacles of the Blessed Sacrament. Women should never be a provocation or occasion of sin to men. And men are not to

be excused by a wandering eye. Contemplate any noble statue or painting of Our Lady—Our Lady of Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima—and you will be struck by heavenly beauty, but also the virtue of modesty. May Our Lady be our model and guide especially in the practice of purity.

4. **Penance.** Jesus stated: “Some devils can be expelled only through prayer and fasting.” We are called to be like eagles to fly high into the lofty heights, but we need two spiritual wings to fly on high—Prayer and Penance! To conquer the imperious demands of the flesh we must pray, pray and pray, but also learn the art of fasting and live a life of penance. All the saints have taught us this clear lesson.

5. **Avoid Laziness.** Another huge opening for the devil of impurity is the capital sin of sloth. Once again maxims are at our beck and call: “Idleness (laziness) is the workshop of the devil.” The great saint and educator and patron of youth, Saint John Bosco experienced a mortal fear when vacations arrived for his young people. He called vacations the harvest ground of the devil. Why? The reason was clear—summer months free and nothing to do! In this state of affairs the devil enters in quickly to tempt in many ways and especially against the virtue of chastity.

6. **Improper Language.** In all times and places and circumstances we should control our tongue. Saint James admonishes us: “We should be slow to speak and quick to listen.” (Read St. James 3—the sins of the tongue) But this is especially pertinent with respect to purity. Never should it happen that issues from our lips dirty words, suggestive language and worse yet coarse, crude and impure jokes. Later on in his life as a mature priest, Saint John Bosco lamented that he could not expunge or erase from his mind an impure thing that a man had uttered in front of him when he was a mere boy. It was engraved in the memory back of the young Bosco and still there as an elderly