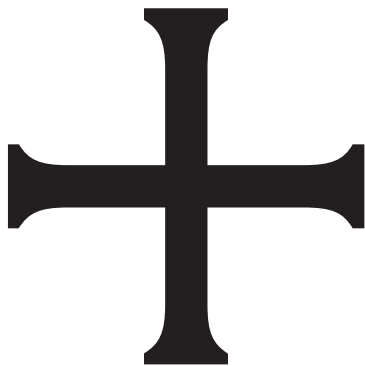


In the Footsteps of Christ Crucified



*A Booklet of Prayer & Meditation
for the following of Christ*

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Our Lord and Savior said: **“You cannot be My disciples, if you do not renounce yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me.”** (cf. Luke 14:27; Matthew 16:24) The Faith teaches us that the footsteps of Christ Crucified lead to the glory of His Resurrection. But even with this knowledge it is difficult for us sinners, beguiled by sins and attached to this world, to have the fortitude, the courage and the hope necessary to put these words, so mysterious and decisive, into practice.

This booklet of prayer is a means to heal this spiritual malady, so that we, sinners, can grow in grace and be sanctified in the following of the Crucified.

We want to be with Jesus in eternity, and hence we take up our cross so as to arrive at His glory, with the help of mediation on His Passion.

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Daily Prayers

In the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The Angelus

first recited in a Franciscan Monastery, in Tuscany, c. 1245 A. D.

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,
R. And She conceived of the Holy Ghost.

Hail Mary . . .

V. Behold, the handmaid of the Lord:
R. Let it be done unto me, according to thy word.

Hail Mary . . .

V. And the Word was made flesh,
R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary . . .

V. Pray for us, o Holy Mother of God:
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of
Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord our God, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection: through the same Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Prayers to the Most Holy Trinity

revealed by the Angel of Peace, in 1916 A. D.

O my God, I believe in Thee, I adore Thee, I hope in Thee, and I love Thee! — I ask pardon for those who do not believe in Thee, do not adore Thee, do not hope in Thee, and do not love Thee! (3x)

O Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I adore Thee profoundly, and I offer Thee the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference with which He is offended. And through the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of Thee the conversion of poor sinners! Amen.

Daily Offering

O Jesus! I offer Thee this day and all that I will do and suffer in it, for the love of Thee, for the Holy Father, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the outrages committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

O Jesus! for love of Thy Most Holy Mother, grant me the grace to love Thee as She does: above all things, so that I may do Thy Holy Will better, this day and all days! I thank Thee for having blessed me with so many graces in my life, and in particular that Thou has granted me the grace to see another day. I resolve to act solely to please Thee: for love of Thee and Thy Immaculate Mother. Amen.

O Jesus, living in Mary

O Jesus, living in Mary, come and live in us, in the spirit of Thy holiness, in the plenitude of Thy gifts, in the perfection of Thy ways, in the truth of Thy virtues, and in communion with Thy Mysteries. Reign in us, against all our menacing enemies, against the world, the flesh, and the Devil, by the power of Thy Holy Ghost, and for the glory of Thy Father. Amen.

Prayers & Meditations *for the following of Christ Crucified*

O Jesus, my only Savior: Who became Man so that thou might die for me; Who fasted forty days in the desert, neither eating nor drinking, so as to give me the courage to mortify myself; Who walked the roads of the Holy Land to give me an example in the acceptance of the little sufferings of daily life; Who endured the insults, the outrages and the disdain of Thy enemies, to teach me to love my enemies; Who, at last, embraced the Cross to save mankind from the punishment of Hell, indicating thereby, too, the path necessary for my own salvation: come to my aide!

I confess that I am a weak, vicious and vile sinner. I know only how to lament my own sufferings, and recount the blessings others receive.

When I contemplate Thy virtue and Thy zeal to save souls, I recognize that I do not have a heart like Thine, I do not have a spirit like Thine, I do not have the vision like Thine! O, my dear Jesus: seeing that Thou hast said: **“He who does not take up his cross and follow Me, cannot be My disciple,”** (Luke 14:27), and **“If anyone would come after Me, let him renounce himself, take up his cross and**

follow Me,” (Matthew 16:24), and seeing that I believe that Thou would never command the impossible, I trust that Thou will give me the grace to put these words into practice, if I ask Thee.

O my good Jesus! I want so much to follow Thee! Hence, I beg Thee, o Most Merciful Lord, to grant me the grace, the light and the heart to be Thy true disciple, to carry my cross and follow Thee, today and for the rest of my life.

*We adore Thee, o Christ, and we bless Thee,
because by means of Thy Holy Cross,
Thou hast redeemed the world, with Mary!*



*To follow Jesus, you need to believe in
Jesus!*

O Jesus, when the crowd of Jews asked Thee: “*Who is this ‘Son of Man’?*”, Thou replied: “**The Light is still with you for a little while; walk while you have the light, so that you might not be overcome by the darkness, because he who walks in darkness,**

knows not where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the Light, so that you might become sons of the Light.” (John 12:31-36)

With these words Thou taught us that it is absolutely necessary that we have faith in Thee, and not only a trust that Thou will be kind towards us. If we accept Thee simply as a good preacher, listening but not changing our life, our mind and our heart, it shall be in vain that we have listened to Thee.

Thy words are light for us in this world of darkness. If we harken unto them and put them into practice, we will become sons of the Light; if we do not put them in practice, we shall lose the Light which Thou are. Hence, to begin to follow Thee is not a devotion for the perfect, it is the sole road to my salvation and for the salvation of all.

O Jesus, my Divine and True Teacher, guide me to Thy Kingdom of Light; lead me on high, far from the shadows of this world! Be my Companion along my own road to Calvary, which is the only escape for me from my sins and vices, which threaten so to swallow me up! Save me, O Savior of the World! and grant me to desire as much to be saved, as Thou desire to save me!

*O Lord, by the sign of Thy Cross,
deliver us from our enemies!*

*Having believed in Jesus,
one must remove the obstacles to follow Him*

Oh Jesus! Thou taught us that no one can be Thy disciple if he does not renounce himself. This truth Thou preached when Thou said: **“Amen, Amen, I say to you: If the grain of wheat does not fall to the ground and die there, it remains but a single grain: but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life in this world, loses it, and he who hates his life in this world, keeps it unto life everlasting.”** (John 12:24-25)

What is this renunciation which Thou ask of us? this death which we must suffer? Thy words **“it remains but a single grain”** explain: if I live for myself, for my advantage; if I am the master of my life; if I seek to live it according to my tastes, I shall remain alone, because I have lived alone, that is, for myself alone.

But, in comparison to eternal life with Thee, what value has this life, which I am living for myself alone? Truly, none at all! At most, I shall live 70, 80, or 90 years. And in all that time I can obtain nothing eternally here: all the possessions which I acquire, will pass away; all my family and relatives and friends shall die; I shall even one day lose my health and, finally, die.

Moreover, when I think of the enormity of my sins, and meditate on the punishment which they merit, I am troubled at heart with the fear of the fires of Hell, which in all justice I have already merited!

O, save me, o Good Jesus! Living for myself alone has brought me to sin and shall bear me to eternal damnation! But to follow Thee is to travel far from sin and towards Heaven. Hence, I risk nothing to follow Thee; on the contrary I save everything, by abandoning this profound error that I can live without Thee!

Jesus, I choose to follow Thee, today and always; not only as My Divine Teacher, but also as my necessary Companion for life. Make my life become a life for Thee, with Thee and in Thee. Save me from myself! and from that profound beguilement, which is the effect of my sins and vices, which pull me to perdition. Without Thee there is no eternal life, there is only death, eternal death.

I want to live, no more for myself, but for Thee, who died for me, and rose from the dead for me! Save me, Lord, save me! Oh, Our Lady of Sorrows, save me!

*Save us, O Christ our Savior, by means of Thy Cross;
Thou who saved Peter in the sea, have mercy on us!*



*For those who have begun to follow
Jesus, there is already the greatest blessing*

O Jesus, Thou explained to us the blessing which Thou will grant those who follow Thee: **“If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”** (John 12:26)

We are nothing in ourselves, and no one will care for us when misfortune and death befall us. But the Eternal Father, the Almighty and Everlasting One, who was, and is and shall live for ever: to be honored by Him is the greatest honor, the greatest blessing. It means that He will hear us when we ask for anything in the Name of Jesus!

How many times have we prayed and it seemed that God did not hear us? What did we pray for? Nothings, useless things, things which serve our vanity, our vices and our desire to be independent from God? Obviously, God will not hear such prayers. But when we have need of God’s help in misfortune, then we pray with humility and zeal, seeing that in such cases one finds help in no one but God!

Hence, the best insurance in this life is to stand in that state of honor in which God the Father will hear us, always and everywhere. If this is the reward for those who have just begun to follow Jesus, then I too want it!

O good Jesus, make me remember always
this best of promises, when I am put to the test
by temptations each day. I do not want to exchange
this infinite honor for the crumbs that Satan offers me!
Come to my aide, Lord, so that I might not act like an
idiot by forgetting this lesson!

*Behold the Cross of the Lord, fly adverse powers,
the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, has
conquered thee!*



*To follow Jesus means
to let His words take root*

Oh Jesus, at the beginning of Thy public ministry,
Thou explained for us the parable of the Sower: “Those
along the path, where the word was sown, are those
who as soon as they have heard it, Satan comes and
carries off the word that was sown in them. And,
likewise, those who receive the seed in rocky ground,
are those who, when they have heard the word,
receive it immediately with joy, but they have

no root in themselves, and when on account of the word there comes tribulation and persecution, they are immediately scandalized ».

(Mark 4:15-17)

When the seed grows, it sprouts roots which enter the earth like little swords, in search of nourishment and water. Thy word, Jesus, is as the seed. It must enter into the soul to find there both the assent of the mind and the consent of the will.

In our daily life, he who has chosen to follow Jesus must fight against his first enemy: his old, evil and carnal habits. As soon as the day begins, we are ready to do what we did yesterday. But for him who has chosen to follow Jesus, it cannot be this way. He must be attentive to act contrary to his old habits, by meditating and praying for the light necessary to understand what must be uprooted to make space for the new life, the new path which he has chosen.

O Jesus, Lord of Light and Lord of Truth, shine upon me and make me understand and hear Thy words! Guide me to reflect upon my vices and give me the light to recognize them for what they are!

*It is fitting that we glory in the Cross of Christ Jesus,
Our Lord, through which we have been redeemed!*

The first spiritual weapon: the rebuke

In the tiny daily battle to remember one's resolution to follow Jesus, it is necessary to make use of the rebuke, that biting reply, of the kind Jesus used against Satan in the desert. As soon as there rises in our heart or mind, in the imagination or memory, before our eyes or behind our back, any kind of temptation which calls us to return to our old life of sin, we must attack it with a biting reply, pronounced silently in our heart or as a whisper upon our lips. Such manner of acting repels the demons.

As, Thou, o Lord, did when thou fasted forty days in the desert, and were tempted by the Devil. When he tempted Thee to satisfy Thy stomach, thou rebuked him, saying: **“Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word which comes forth from the mouth of God!”** (Mathew 4:4) Thus, did Thou teach us that we must renounce the desire for carnal pleasures, even when they may seem necessary for life, because true life does not depend upon pleasures or appearances, but upon Thy word which is Truth!

Again, when Satan tempted Thee to put Thyself in danger, by throwing Thyself from the parapet of the Temple, presuming in this manner in the

help of God, Thy Father; Thou rebuked him, with just anger, saying: **“Do not tempt the Lord, thy God!”** (Matthew 4:7)

Thus, Thou taught us not to presume upon Thy grace, upon Thy help, when we are in danger. Instead, we are obliged, first of all, to remove ourselves from the danger, inasmuch as we can; and thus we understand that we must remove ourselves from the occasion of those sins into which we fall habitually; those traps which always succeed to fool us.

Finally, when Satan offered Thee the power, the enjoyment and the riches of this world, Thou put him to flight, saying, as Thou did, with the greatest zeal: **“Adore the Lord, thy God, and serve Him alone!”** (Mathew 4:10) So that we might remember to despise all the goods of this world, recognizing in this manner that true riches, true enjoyment, true power consists in adoring Thee and serving Thee, today, always, and for all eternity!

O my Jesus, teach me to fight Satan with rebukes, because Thou too, used this spiritual weapon. To follow Thee, we too must enter the battle: teach us how! Give us today the perseverance in defending ourselves against temptations no matter how frequently these come against us, since every time we defeat a temptation with a rebuke, we merit more grace, more light, and more fortitude!

*O great work of piety: death died when Life
expired upon the Wood of the Cross!*



The second spiritual weapon: fasting

Jesus, Thou taught us the necessity of fasting, when Thou said: **“Can the friends of the groom fast, when the groom is still with them? As long as the groom is with them, they cannot fast. But there shall come the days when the groom is taken from them, and then, in those days, they shall fast.”** (Mark 2:19-20)

We are those friends; Thou are that Groom. Now that Thou hast ascended into Heaven, Thou are taken from us, since we know Thee only through the obscurity of faith. When temptations came against Thy disciples, one word from Thee was sufficient to drive them away. Hence, fasting was not necessary for them. But now it is necessary for us.

So many of our temptations are founded in the body; and when we eat too much, our body loses the sobriety fitting to the life of a Christian,

fitting for the life which leads to Thee.

Fasting is so necessary that there is no Saint who did not fast; no liturgical season in which it is not recommended; no religious order which does not fast. Moreover, the blessing for those who use this spiritual weapon is enormous: the body and sense know the peace of chastity, the strength of insensibility against the temptations of the flesh; the mind knows peace in tribulations, the silence of the imagination, the strength of innocence.

The warrior who wants victory puts on a breastplate of armor. Fasting is the breastplate of the spiritual life. Even Jesus taught us to use it, when, before beginning to preach, He fasted 40 days, without eating or drinking! Imagine! God fasted to prepare Himself for the spiritual battle. How much more ought we to fast!

The Holy Spirit also favors this practice. In fact, He inspired all His favorite souls to fast! He even taught certain Saints, for example, to fast from their childhood. Like St. Nicholas, who fasted as a baby on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays! Hermit Saints, like St. Niccolò Politi, ate only bread and herbs for 34 years! St. Francis of Paola never ate meat, fish, cheese or eggs! Even Jesus, when He was not fasting, ate barley loaves and dried fish, according to the Gospels!

If fasting is the best armor, one should use it

always. And according to the Saints, the best fasting is the continual fast, during which one eats very little animal protein (meat, fish, eggs, cheese, milk, etc.) and limits the quantity of every other food, especially those most pleasurable to one's taste.

The greatest hermit Saint, St. John the Baptist, and the Fathers of the Desert, never ate meat, never drank wine or liquor. The greater your faith, the greater will be your fasting, because he who greatly desires the victory, will put on the armor of the best quality! Moreover, the greater your humility, the greater will be your fasting, because he who recognizes himself as a sinner, and wishes to be saved, will protect his soul!

At the beginning, the followers of Christ Crucified, ought at least to practice the tradition of fasting taught by St. Peter Damian, of not eating meat on Fridays; or that taught by St. Alphonsus dei Liguori, of fasting on Fridays and Saturdays, the one in honor of Jesus, the other in honor of His Blessed Mother. Then, when they ask Jesus for greater courage, they can keep they can fast like St. Francis of Assisi, who never ate meat in Lent nor from Nov. 2 to Dec. 24. Or they can imitate the holy hermits, who fast from Sept. 14 to Dec. 24 and from Jan. 7 til Easter.

Finally, Jesus Himself taught us the power which flows from fasting, joined with prayer, when He liberated the man possessed by a legion of devils, He said afterwards:

“Demons of this kind can only be driven out with prayer and fasting.” (Matthew 17:20)

O Divine Master, grant me the faith and the hope to fast often and always! Send Thy Holy Spirit into my soul to convince me of the necessity of fasting, that I might see the wisdom of practicing it, and thirst to do so! Make me recognize the wickedness of my sinfulness, so that I will want to crush it with fasting!

*O Cross, more resplendent than all the stars,
celebrated throughout the world, more lovable than
mankind, holier than the universe; Thou alone was
worthy to weigh the Price of the world!*



The third spiritual weapon: the mortification of the eyes

O Jesus, so great was the mortification Thou didst practice with Thy eyes, that Thou never permitted Thyself to raise them without necessity! So rarely did Thou permit Thyself, that Saint Luke, on the occasion of Thy Sermon on the Mount, records that Thou raised Thy eyes to look at the crowd gathered before Thee! (Luke 6:20)

And Thou taught us clearly the necessity of this

practice, saying: “No one, having lit a lamp, places it under a bushel basket; no, he puts it on a lamp stand, so that whoever enters, sees the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is pure, the whole body will be illuminated; but if it is evil, the whole body will be in the darkness. Take care, therefore, that the light in you is not the darkness. Therefore, if the whole body is illuminated, without any part in the shadows, the whole will be alight, as when a lamp illumines with its splendor.” (Luke 11:33-36)

The Saints, meditating on Thy teaching, explain that the eyes are the doors of the soul; since the sight is the sense through which we can spiritually touch all things. Hence, the Saints of the Old Testament considered it a sign of honor, and justly so, that they had never raised their eyes to gaze at any pagan idol along the roadside.

In fact, what we see, we appreciate. And what we permit ourselves to see, we respect. And obviously, the follower of Jesus ought not respect nor appreciate anything but God! Spiritual dangers are often very different from corporal dangers. We have to look out for the holes in the road, so that we do not fall into them. But the wordly or carnal things which attract our heart and mind: it is sufficient to see them and we fall into devotion to them!

O Jesus, Thou were impeccable and without the stain of original sin! But even Thou kept Thy eyes pure!

How much more ought we! Hence, I beg Thee,
Good Shepherd, grant me the grace to control my
eyes, so that I might turn them towards things just and
holy, and turn them away from things carnal and
attracting! Give me, also, a spirit to appreciate the talent
of the agile and keen warrior, who knows how to move
every member of his body to avoid the blows of his enemy
and the jabs of their swords! Make me see, too, the
wisdom of mortifying all my senses and of avoiding every
occasion of sin!

*O Cross, sweet is Thy Wood, sweet Thy nails,
which bore such a sweet Weight; save the flock
gathered about Thee, to praise Thee!*



The fourth spiritual weapon: penance

O Jesus, when the Jews spoke to Thee of the tragedy
which had befallen the Galileans, who having rebelled
against the Romans, were slain by Pontius Pilate; Thou
remarked: **“Do you think that those Galileans were the
worst sinners in all of Galilee, because they suffered
in that manner? No, I tell you; but if you do**

not do penance, you will all perish in the same manner. Or, do you think that those 18 who died when the tower of Siloe fell upon them, were the most guilty of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem? No, I tell you, but if you do not do penance, you will all perish in the same manner.” (Luke 13:1-5) To the Jews of old, Thou spoke of the future tragedy which they would suffer at the hand of the Romans, when having renounced Thee, and rebelled, the Romans would come and destroy Jerusalem. But to us, Thou warns that on account of the weight of the punishment which we have merited by our past sins, we are in great danger of punishment if we do not do penance now. Even our family members, friends, neighbors and fellow citizens are in the same danger if no one comes forward and does penance for their sins.

The first duty of Thy followers is to repay Thee for the many times they have offended Thee by the sins of so many years of infidelity. Moreover, sharing in Thy work of making reparation for sin, is the greatest honor that Thou can concede: the most noble and most precious battle! How many times hast Thou told us in the Gospel: **“Follow Me!”** But Thy footsteps lead to Calvary, where Thou suffered for sinners. If Thou dost invite us to follow Thee to Calvary, it must be that Thou art inviting us to share in Thy work of suffering to make reparation for the damage caused by sins: first for our sins, then for those of others.

Just as in an earthly battle, the best strategy against an enemy is not the defense, but the offense; so in a spiritual battle, the best strategy to make progress in holiness, is not only avoiding sins or their occasions, but in doing penance, which is the greatest act of justice and mercy which we can do for ourselves and others.

Yes, we do penance when we fast or mortify our senses; but we do greater penance when we endure with patience and charity the small, daily offenses and discomforts which we experience or suffer, from others; the disdain from enemies, or the envy and coldness of neighbors. We can also do extraordinary penance, by means of going on pilgrimage, taking cold showers in the winter, walking barefoot; or by scourging our bodies, making vigils and praying in the night: in a word, by doing anything thing displeasing and difficult to our carnal sense.

Yet, all these works are worth but a little without a worthy, sacramental confession; the humility and charity of which cancel much of the punishment merited by our sins! Indeed, the greater the sorrow we have at heart for our sins, the more efficacious will our penances and confessions be. And such a sorrow, we can obtain in prayer, *if we ask for it.*

Moreover, as the zealous warrior would do, the best penance is to embrace a life of constant penance; so that we are never lacking in the merit of the day, unto life everlasting. For this reason, the best penitential life

is found in undertaking the vocation of a religious, a monk, a hermit, or a friar; because in such a manner one's whole life becomes a penitential offering for sin; in a lesser manner the life of penance is found by the one who becomes the member of a third order, which obliges penitential practices at regular times.

O Good Jesus! If Thou dost desire so much that we follow Thee, how much more are Thou pleased when we suffer with Thee and do penance with Thee! I want to love Thee in truth, and not only with lovely words on my lips! Pour into me, o Savior of the World, O Divine Heart, Thy spirit of penance, Thy love which moved Thee to suffer for others, to expiate their sins, so that I might merit the greatest fullness of Thy Eternal Love and be as pleasing to Thee as Thou Thyself desire!

He has borne the Cross, who has conquered Hell; Girt with power, He rose on the third day!



The fifth spiritual weapon: the resolution

O Jesus, Thou taught us the importance of watching over ourselves, so many times; in

particular when Thou said to us: **“Be on your guard and pray since you do not know when the hour will come. Do as that man, who, before leaving his house to go on a journey, entrusts it to his servants, assigning to each one his own duty and recommending to the door keeper to make vigil. Make vigil, therefore, because you do not know the hour, when the owner of the house will come; if at night, or midnight, or at the cry of the rooster, or at morn; so that it does not happen that he comes upon you unawares and finds you sleeping. What I say, I say to all: make vigil!”** (Mark 13:33-36) Moreover, Thou said: **“Let your loins be girt and your lamps alight!”** (Luke 12:39-40), to make us understand that one needs to be prepared for the spiritual battles to come.

Our spiritual house is our soul; the door keeper of which is our intellect; the servants of which are the faculties of our memory, imagination, and our senses. The final victory for Christ’s followers requires vigilance. And vigilance requires preparation.

We prepare the soul for the daily spiritual battle with resolutions. A resolution is a firm decision of will to do or not do something, so that we might be prepared to avoid sin or to do some work of mercy or charity, for God or neighbor. Like the recovering alcoholic who makes the resolution never to walk along those streets

where liquor is for sale; or like the schoolboy who makes the resolution to read his lessons each morning, again, so as to be prepared for any questions put to him by his teachers; the follower of Jesus must prepare himself with resolutions.

Resolutions differ according to the spiritual necessities of each of us; but so many are similar and useful for all, like the proposal to pray as soon as one wakes and before going to bed, so that the day might begin with God and His Holy Spirit, and finish with gratitude and supplications for perseverance.

A good and useful rule for making resolutions is this: when one sees that there is any spiritual necessity, grave or constant, seek some cure for it and make the proposal to put this practice into effect as often as the necessity arises.

For example, if you have a neighbor who offends you, and for you this is an occasion of a lack of charity for him, make the resolution to do some act of charity every time you sin against charity towards him; and make the resolution to apprise the occasion of his disparaging remarks as an occasion of meriting grace for you and him. In thus wise, you protect yourself in the encounter and afterwards, and conquer the occasion of sin!

Or if in your town there is a woman too beautiful for you, such that just to look at her is an

occasion of lust for you; make the resolution to avoid that part of town in which she lives, to turn your eyes the other way when you see her, or better to flee the place; wipe every memory of her from your mind, and make the resolution to rebuke yourself when the occasion arises, saying: “A moment of carnal pleasure is not worth eternal punishment!” or “True beauty is not found with the eyes”!

Or, if you have friends who invite you to participate in some dangerous or sinful diversion, make the resolution to reply to their invitations, when they make them, saying, “I am too busy today, another time; thank you!” Or if vainglory is your weakness, make the resolution, when the temptation comes to improve your appearance, to rebuke yourself, saying: “Why trouble myself: the worms which will eat my mortal remains, will feast as well on a beauty or a beast!” or “No one who apprises me for my looks, truly loves me, because I am more than a body which dies today and rots tomorrow in the grave!” Or if impurity is your principal vice, make the resolution to fast or omit a meal, every time you sense concupiscence in your flesh.

O Divine Master, what an utterly disorganized and unprepared disciple I am! Help me, teach me, inspire me to make good resolutions, to avoid my sins and practice virtue! Teach me the art of spiritual warfare!

*This sign of the Cross shall appear in the sky,
when the Lord comes to judge the world!*



The sixth spiritual weapon: zeal for things divine

We are born sinners, but we are called to be saints. Hence, it is obvious that we must change ourselves in our short life, and change much!

Thus, in this work of sanctification, one needs to have a zeal for the things divine! That desire that is not satisfied for mediocrity, for being the same today as yesterday, which identifies itself with the past.

With God's grace everything is possible on the path of sanctification. There are saints who were prostitutes, but who merited the crown of virgins by their penance and chastity! Atheists and Jews, who after their conversion, became missionaries!

The wise and prudent follower of Jesus Christ, Crucified, does not fence himself in, or limit his response to the Lord. It is sufficient that Jesus wants a thing, and he gives it to Him! Sufficient that Jesus say, "Follow me elsewhere", or "Put that aside, and take up this!"

With perseverance, one can even transform the society in which he lives, to renew the spirit of the Faith in his own town. It is enough to begin with little works and to increase these every year. Divine zeal is never satisfied; it seeks always to share more grace, light, and the blessing of Jesus.

If we serve the Lord in our parish, or outside of it, with others or by ourselves, it is sufficient that we spread the true spirit and true teaching of Jesus, as He has handed it down in His Catholic Church, and we shall do His will: to live according to the Faith, to guard Hope; to practice and share the love of God for God and neighbor.

In our age, so preoccupied with material necessities, it is important for the followers of the Crucified to give a special emphasis to the spiritual works of mercy: giving counsel to the doubtful; teaching those ignorant of our Holy Faith; admonishing sinners not to sin; comforting the sorrowful; forgiving injuries; supporting the injustices we suffer; and praying for the dead. So many of these mercies are forgotten today.

But we must also not forget the corporal works of mercy: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless; visiting the sick, and burying the dead.

Zeal for things divine also urges us to care

that the liturgical rites of the Church are accomplished with dignity and reverence, and that we attend them with reverence and respect; divine zeal also urges us to keep Christ's churches clean, to repair sacred places, to spread Catholic books, and sacred images; to oppose all things indecent, especially in public places; to vote for true Christians, and not to forget our own responsibility to serve the public good, honestly and not for motives of gain or power.

Who is that follower of Jesus who longs as much to do the will of God, as Jesus longs that he do so?

We can never compare our zeal with His desire and His impatience to see us begin to serve Him. Hence, let us never set any limit. The Kingdom of God is not advanced by setting up limits against the zeal for things divine!

O Divine Master and most merciful Savior, fill me with the spirit of zeal for doing Thy will; immerse me in Thy Sacred Heart, that I might drink there of Thy love for sinners!

*O faithful Cross, among all trees the only noble one;
no wood has sprouted such leaves
such flowers and such shoots!*



*Every warrior has need of rest,
food and medicine*

We are not Jesus, who, being God, did not have to rest, eat or take medicine. But even He, as Man, rested and ate to give us an example of humility! Hence, if we truly desire to become His followers, to walk along the way to Calvary so as to flee this world and save our souls, it is obvious that we must take time to rest, to eat and to heal our wounds, after the daily battle.

Rest for the Christian warrior is the prayer of meditation. To make it, it is opportune that one begin with a short reading from the Gospels, the Catechism, or from the writings of the Saints. Then to reflect on the reading, so as to understand and accept the truths taught in it. Finally, to pray to God and the Saints for help, asking for particular graces for oneself and others. He who meditates every day, without fail, will receive, in a short time, that special gift of grace, called “the virtue of devotion.” This virtue gives one the capacity to do every good work with joy and facility.

The daily food of the Christian warrior is Jesus, in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. To go to Mass and receive Communion is the most supernatural and sacred act we can do; hence the best thing

is to do it daily; but always worthily. Because to receive Him with mortal sin on the soul is an enormous outrage against Him, which puts Him in a body, filthy and under the power of the Devil!

Hence, it is necessary for the Christian warrior to go to confession often and regularly because, as the Psalmist says, *even a holy man sins seven times a day!* In fact, every sin weakens the soul more, makes a vice grow, disposes to other sins, and increases the power of the Devil over it. The Sacrament of Confession is the necessary medicine of the soul; thus for the serious warrior, to confess every week is a necessity, whether to recover from his wounds, or to thwart the devil every more victoriously.

Finally, the Christian warrior will have his victories when he seeks always to do the will of God, and not his own will. Hence it is important to put into practice the inspirations which come from God, which indicate the road which the Divine Will has chosen for him. And to do this with *great* humility!

*O Jesus, without Thee, we can do nothing;
give us today the humility to recognize this,
more and more!*



How to go to Confession

*First spend some time examining your conscience, to recall all the sins you have committed, as best you can, since the time of your last confession. Then enter the confessional, make the sign of the Cross and say, “**Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been** (indicate the time) **since I made my last confession.**” Then mention all your sins according to kind, number, and circumstances, adding: “**And for these and all the sins of my life, even those which I cannot remember, I ask God’s forgiveness and pardon.**” Then, when the Priest asks you to, say the act of contrition:*

Act of Contrition

O My God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, not only because by them I have merited the loss of Heaven and the pains of Hell, but most of all because I have offended Thee, My Lord and God, who art infinitely Good and worthy of infinite love. Therefore, trusting in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I firmly resolve to sin no more, to avoid the near occasions of sin, and to do penance for them. Amen.

Spiritual Communion with Mary

O Immaculate Queen of Heaven and Earth, Mother of God and Mediatrix of every grace: I believe that Thy dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, is truly, really, and substantially contained in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love Him above all things and I long to receive Him into my heart. Since I cannot now receive Him sacramentally, be so good as to place Him spiritually in my soul. (*moment of silence*) O my Jesus, I embrace Thee as One who has already come, and I unite myself entirely to Thee: never permit me to be separated from Thee. Amen.

Prayer to St. Michael, the Archangel

whose protection is absolutely necessary for spiritual advancement

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly, pray, and do thou, o Prince of the heavenly host, cast into Hell Satan and all the and all the other evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.



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