

## CHAPTER 7

# THE LIFE OF PURITY

**"Who conquers his body has conquered his nature, and who conquered his nature became above it, and who became above the human nature, has shared the nature of the angels"**

**St. John El-Dargy**

- A) The honour of the life of purity**
- B) Youth and the life of purity**
- C) Causes of the sins of youth**
- D) How do we attain purity?**
- E) After the fall**
- F) Dreams and body discharges**
- G) Important instructions**

## **A) THE HONOUR OF THE LIFE OF PURITY**

Divine Inspiration said in the Book of Wisdom "How good is the chaste generation" (Wisdom 4:1). St. Paul said to the Thessalonians "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in

holiness" (Thessalonians 4:3, 7). Holiness here is chastity or purity which is the opposite of sexual immorality or impurity. Our teacher the apostle Paul also said "For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Purity is the life of angels in heaven as the Lord of Glory said "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30). The martyr St. Kebrianos talking to some virgins confirming this meaning said "You have started now while you are in this life, to enjoy what shall be in heaven after the resurrection. Because you kept your virginity, you have resembled the angels". Father John Cassian said "**There will be no virtue which make the human resemble the angels like the virtue of chastity, because the human live with chastity - while still in the body - as if they have no bodies, and as if they have free spirits as the Apostle said "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit" (Romans 8:9). But, the human who lives in chastity and purity is higher than the angels who live without bodies which desire against their spirits"**.

**God has honored this virtue. When He wanted to send His only Beloved Son in the flesh born from a woman, He did not want Him to be born except from a celibate virgin who vowed her life to chastity and purity.** The two saints Eronimos and Augustine said that the Lord loved His disciple John more than the rest of the disciples for his celibacy. We thus read what Solomon the Wise said " He who loves purity of heart ... , the king will be his friend" (Proverbs 22:11). This was explained, applying it to John the celibate disciple whom Jesus loved more than the rest of the disciples. He was so close to Jesus that he had leaned on His bosom at the Last Supper, and asked Him what other disciples dare not ask: "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" (John 21:20). And when Jesus showed Himself again to some of the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, after His Glorious Resurrection, nobody recognized Him except John the celibate disciple who said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" (John 21:1-7).

St. Eronimos commented on this event by saying "Nobody recognised Him except John, because it was only the celibate who knew the Celibate, the Son of the celibate". Finally in the most critical and difficult moments, we see the Lord honors celibacy, chastity and purity, in the person of His celibate mother and His disciple John the celibate. He did not charge His mother except to His celibate disciple, and did not command His celibate disciple to take care except of His celibate mother (John 19:26, 27).

**In his revelation, John the celibate showed us the superiority of chastity and purity in heaven.** He spoke about the one hundred and forty-four thousand celibates whom he saw standing on the heavenly Mount Zion, singing a new song which nobody could learn except those only. Those are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they were virgins. Those are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:1-4). There is no display to the honour of the life of chastity and purity better than having a special song which belong to them alone and that "they follow the Lamb wherever He goes".

**If the virtue of chastity and purity has this high worth to God, we find the contrary is true for the sin of sexual immorality and impurity.** Because of it God wiped out the old world by the Flood, burned down the two cities Sodom and Gomorrah, and killed in one day twenty three thousands Israelites in the desert after they committed adultery with the women of Moab. Also

because of this sin, David was at great loss, and his son Solomon worshipped the idols. In summary, in the past God got angry with His people "for the spirit of harlotry is in their midst" (Hosea 5:4). No wonder the Apostle tells us that because of this sin "The wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 5:5, 6). **The power of God and His help leave the person who is enslaved to this sin.** As the pigeon which Noah let loose returned to the ark when it found no place among the dead corpses, the same is with the Spirit of the Lord - Which resembles this pigeon - Which never dwells in the impure, but in the pure bodies.

## **B) YOUTH AND THE LIFE OF PURITY**

There is no doubt that what hinders youth from living the life of virtue and spiritual growth is the sexual problem. Some think that the life of purity for youth could be almost impossible. The reality is not that. We have many examples in the Holy Bible and in the Church history which affirm this thinking.

Man was created pure in the image of God and God wants him to be pure. Hence He gave him all the possibilities to help him live the life of purity. How can man then doubt in these possibilities? **In fact if we searched all the sins of youth, we find that one falls in them by himself due to his deviations and the exposure of himself to excitements. In that St. Filoxinos says "The desire defeats us not because it is stronger than us but because of our inability and our carelessness. It dares not fight you unless your will permits it, or it may fight you in a natural way without your will".**

### **THE SECRET OF THE POWER OF YOUTH:**

The potential of the power of youth is in its purity and chastity. A victorious youth in his sexual life is victorious also in almost all the other sides of his life. But a youth who gives himself as a prisoner to his desires, is also a failure in almost all his life. The Holy Bible, Church history and our daily observations in the society, all, give us live examples of the truth of what we say.

**Samson of the supernatural strength** dealt cunningly with the Palestinians and he killed hundreds and hundreds of them. Yet when he surrendered to his desire at the knees of Delilah, he fell in the hands of his enemies, who plucked out his eyes, degraded him to the level of animals, and made him turn a grinder instead of the mute animal (Judges Chapter 16).

**But chaste Joseph**, who was in his purity faithful to God, and to his master Potiphar - was saved by God from his difficulty; He took him out of prison to become a counsellor to the people of Egypt, and their supporter, and even the supporter to other neighbouring nations (Genesis Chapters 39-41).

**Pope Mettaous** the 87th Patriarch, used in his youth to shepherd the sheep, when the devil tried to make him fall in the sin of youth. The devil moved the heart of a woman from the place where he often went, to mock him. When he asked her about the secret of her admiration of him, she answered "it is your eyebrows young man". He went aside, shaved off his eyebrows with great courage, and took them to her saying "woman, here are the hairs of my eyebrows which you desired". The woman looked at him, and was horrified at his strong devotion to purity.

#### **A STORY:**

History preserves for us the story of a chaste virgin living quietly in her house, when the devil moved the heart of a youth to desire her with an impure love. He did not stop visiting her house. When the virgin realised that, she was deeply saddened. One day, he came as usual and knocked on the door, when she was sitting at the loom. When she realised it was him, she went to the door with the weaving needle in her hand and asked him "Man, what makes you come here?". He answered "Loving you, lady". Then she asked "What do you love in me?". He said "Your eyes overwhelm me, and when I look at you, my heart gets inflamed". She then entered the weaving needle in one of her eyes, firmly plucked it out, threw it at him, and was going to do the same with her other eye, but the youth held her hand, and she entered her house and closed the door. When the youth saw that she took out her eye, he was very sad, and was sorry for what happened to her because of him. He left and went right away to the desert and became a monk.

#### **A SECOND STORY:**

When the Arab armies were invading Jerusalem, the invading soldiers attacked one of the convents for virgins, caught a beautiful nun and presented her as a present to their leader. When he wanted to do evil with her, she said to him "Give me a little time, because I have a profession which I learnt from the virgins, and only a virgin can do it". He asked her "What is that?". She said, "It is a lotion, if anybody is rubbed with it, a sword or any weapon cannot affect him, and you need that because you are at war all the time". He asked her "How can I be sure of that?". She took oil and looked at him saying "Rub your neck and give me the sword to hit you with". He answered "No, but rub your neck first and let me hit you with the sword". She gladly accepted and quickly rubbed her neck and said "Hit it very hard". He took the sword which was very sharp, while the saint stretched her neck, which he hit with all his might. Her head rolled on the ground and that is

how the bride of Christ accepted to die by the sword, rather than defile her celibacy. The leader was very saddened, and cried bitterly as he had killed such a beautiful image, and knew that she deceived him to escape from impurity and committing sin.

### **A THIRD STORY:**

At the time of the Roman persecution of the Copts in Egypt, the Roman atheistic rulers were completely astounded at how the Copts held firm to their faith, to the extent that they preferred death - but even asked for it cheerfully - rather than deny their faith. The rulers searched for the secret of this power, until they found out that the secret of the strength of the Copts is in their strong hold on their chastity and purity. Since then, the rulers tried to spoil the purity of those who refuse to submit to their orders to deny the Christian faith.

From among those was a Christian youth who refused to deny the faith. So they tied him on a bed with ropes and brought him a woman to mock him and excite his desire and lessen his strength. But when this hero could not find a means of escaping, and the woman was persisting in her evil, continuing to mock him, he could not find a free member in his body except his tongue. He put it out of his mouth, tore it with his teeth and spat it in the face of the evil woman where lots of blood flew. The woman, on seeing that, was terrified and immediately escaped. The youth preferred to cut his tongue rather than defile his body and destroy his purity.

### **A FOURTH STORY:**

This is a story of two heroes who were martyred for the sake of the life of purity at the time of Diocletian. These are the martyrs Theodorah and Didimos. After the ruler failed to convince the girl Theodorah to burn incense to the idols and to destroy her virginity, he put her in one of the brothels. But a Christian young man by the name of Didimos was able to rescue her from this house. By a trick he changed her clothes and took her out of the house in the uniform of a soldier and stayed in her place. When he was discovered, the ruler ordered to cut his head and throw his body in the fire. While the soldiers were taking him to the place of execution, Theodorah was seen to run after him, and said to him in a rebuking manner "Brother, why did you steal my crown?". She also was discovered and the two were martyred at the same time in the year 302 A.D.

These were some examples of the heroes of purity who stood in front of the rulers and astonished them by their dare and bravery, for whom the rulers bowed their heads in admiration and appreciation. They were able to control themselves and conquer their desires. The Wise Solomon was correct when he said "He who rules his spirit is better than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

## C) CAUSES OF THE SINS OF YOUTH

**St. Filoxinos** says "Guard yourself from the causes which attract you to the desire. Close the windows from which it enters to you. Because if you eliminate the means from which pains are born, you would have strengthened yourself well. **The desire may start from the body, or it may start from the wandering thoughts, or from outside causes.** We thus should distinguish the causes, eliminate them and try to close their intakes".

**This saint has summarised the causes which attract us to the desire in three categories:**

### **(First) The Body:**

**Meaning the heat of the body, its slackening, or its sickness.**

(a) The heat of the body is created either naturally because of age in the stage of youth or adolescence for example, or from too much eating and the presence of energy in the body in excess to its natural need. It is also created from eating certain food with spices which excite the nerves, and from drinks which exhaust the nerves.

(b) The slackening of the body comes from laziness, too much sleep and from giving the body rest in excess of it needs.

(c) By the sickness of the body, it means bad functioning of some glands which result in exciting sexual organs, when these glands do not secrete properly. This case needs special medical treatment. This disease may have been caused from an increase in the sensitivity of the sexual system resulting from previous exhaustion, perhaps from excessive practising of this sin. Such body may be more susceptible for the slightest causes, than other bodies.

### **(Second) The Thought:**

**Which means the impure thoughts which aggravate the person and persist with different degrees in its ugliness.** Mostly because the mind is occupied with these thoughts and not basically with good or useful thoughts. It might also be a war of the devil against the pure saints, so that they lower their thoughts and bargain with him, or enjoy what defiles them. This point enters into the next item, which is the external causes.

### **(Third) External Causes:**

**Which are the stumbling blocks which come to us from the senses.**

The senses are the intakes of knowledge for the human. They are also intakes of stumbling blocks. The eye for example looks at exciting pictures and the ear hears bad exciting words as well. In both cases, the sight and the hearing connect with the thought and from here sin arises.

### **(1) The sight:**

It is an important door through which the sins of youth enter. St. Augustine considers it the first ring in the chain of falling. The sins of the sight are due to staring at the other sex without reservation, or from looking at obscene pictures (in the cinema, television, magazines or the like), or from reading dirty books, and looking at cheap magazines which aim to excite the senses of youth, and also the books which deal with sexual subjects in the wrong way.

### **(2) The hearing:**

This sense also has a strong effect. Listening to stories, jokes and impure talks from perverted people (evil friends), contaminate our thoughts and as a result move our sexual desire.

### **(3) The touch:**

We realise the danger of this sense in very crowded places. It is also considered the strongest point in the problem of masturbation.

**We come out from all that, that our presence in the place of sin, where our spiritual resistance weakens or crumbles, leads us to completing it.** The piece of wrought iron for example, when enters a magnetic field, must get attracted to the pole which creates this field. This is a must. As a result, this piece of iron gains new properties by becoming itself a magnet which has the properties of the original magnet. The only way to bring back this piece of iron to its original properties is to take it out of the magnetic field. **In the same manner if we put ourselves in the field of the desire, we will be attracted to it because we are only human subject to excitement. The only way to get rid of these new effects which influenced us or the new features which we gained, and to return back to our original pure and clear nature, is to get away from the field of sin.**

The saint known as 'The Spiritual Elder' said "This is the sequence of the senses of the man of God in discernment: prevent your sight from looking to the vanishing human beauty, that is by looking towards God. Prevent your ear from listening to every bad hearing, that is by listening to the secrets of the Almighty. Beware from smelling the evil scent and guard your mouth from every worldly taste, and from every vain talk, and be satisfied with speaking to God, and talking to your Creator. The fifth sense, I mean the touch, deliver it to the vigilant keeper, and ask for chastity in all your movement and your touch, so that God guards you from impure thoughts ...".

## **(Fourth) Causes Other Than Those Mentioned by St. Filoxinos:**

### **1 - The Most Serious Case:**

**When the sexual state becomes a desire in the heart, we mean the permanent fixed desire which enslaves the whole of man, it goes out from the heart to the thought and enslaves him for its satisfaction.** He either goes for what he has in front of him from excitement, or he invents excitement of sexual pleasures, uses imagination in an unclean way, authors stories, imagines visions, manages talks, and the desire goes from the heart to the senses and defiles him also. Hence he loses his simplicity, and imagines impurities in everything even in innocent matters which pass by his senses. By that the feeling is inflamed, the whole body is defiled, and excites in him coveting actions.

The Lord Jesus says "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). **He did not say "Whoever looks at a woman has already committed adultery with her", as the main factor in this sin is the desire which "When conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:15).**

**In any case there is collaboration between the four sources from which the desire issues, whether the heart, thought, sense, or the body. From whichever the desire starts, if the thought is defiled, the heart, sense and body may be defiled with it, and if the sense is defiled, the thought, heart and body may be defiled with it, and so on.**

**The ugliness of the sexual sin surfaces - as it matures in its actual state - when it includes the whole person in his body, thought, senses, and everything in him.** Hence when he falls, his fall is great, as not one stone in him shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down. Our Teacher St. Paul said "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

## **2 - Pride:**

This cause is outside the whole of the sexual circle. **So, what is the relation between pride and sexual immorality?**

The answer is clear and it is **that Divine Grace departs from the proud person because of his pride and he falls into sin. God permits that in order for him to humiliate himself and realises his weakness and leaves his pride.**

There is no greater sin which humiliates a person with inflated ego in his spiritual life as the sin of sexual immorality, so horrible that it is sometimes known as the sin of impurity. St. John El-Dargy said "If you are not purified from the glorification, you will not overcome the pains of sexual immorality or any of the other pains". He also said "No one overcomes his body except he who crushes his heart, and no one crushes his heart except he who died for his desires". The saintly Fathers said "Who brags with his piety falls in the sin of sexual immorality, and who brags with his knowledge falls in the sin of blasphemy".

**"Condemnation" hides behind and is fortified by pride.** Do not allow yourself to condemn someone falling into sexual sin, but have kindness and compassion for him. Do not be enraged or mock him, but pray for him that the Lord raises him. Let his fall be a cause for you to be modest, knowing that you are human like him, very weak, and you could be blown into sinning like the dust on earth. Tell yourself "He fell today, and I might fall tomorrow". If you are quick to condemn others and despise them, know that God will give you a lesson you will not forget, in order to realise your weakness, and God may permit you to be tempted with the same temptation of your brother. The Apostle said **"Do not be haughty, but fear"** (Romans 11:20).

**Look out to yourself dear brother. You may be walking in the Divine Road diligently, except for the sexual attacks, for which you know no sexual causes which justify your labour. They may be due to pride in the soul which made God's Grace leave you.**

## **TWO GENERAL CAUSES:**

**There are two vital factors related to the sexual problem, which are love and energy.**

\* For each person there is a love emotion. When it is not utilised properly, the devil may make use of it and bind it to the body, where it deviates and goes in the circle of sexual love, and is defiled by the desires of the body. **Therefore those who fulfilled their love emotion, in a good spiritual manner, are very content from the sexual side on this point.** Among the proper utilization of the love emotion are the following:

**(1) Visiting the sick:** By which love takes an elevated form of tenderness and kindness. For those it is unlikely that they are tempted by sexual desires.

**(2) Visiting the poor and the widows and caring for the orphans** in the orphanages or wherever they are, and the other different social services.

**(3) The different spiritual services,** in alleviating the suffering of those who are in difficulties, sympathising with the grieving, and visiting the prisoners, ... etc.

**(4) Teaching services,** as in Sunday Schools for example, and what that accompanies from the feelings of fatherhood, and pastoral emotions, ...

**(5) Friendships:** An inward looking person who has no friend, who does not find anyone with whom he exchanges love and safekeeping for his secrets, most probably becomes a prey to sexual attacks and falls, as he might find in them love which satisfies his empty heart. We thus advise the person who wishes to avoid such falls, to make himself a reservoir of love which

overflows over his pure friends who exchange with him love with love, and not to search for a substitute in the sexual circle.

**(6) In this context, are those** who satisfy their love emotion by the love of their nation, or by a hobby, such as writing poetry, playing music, or the like, in many different fields.

**\* Every person has energy and heat, which if not used in a useful way, may deviate to harmful sexual practices.** A person who exhausts his body energy in studying, or some social work, or even in physical sports, does not have excess body energy which fights him, to the contrary of his colleague gives his body excess rest.

### **STAGES OF SIN:**

The sexual problem goes through stages which differ in its strength and depth, and each needs a special and suitable treatment. There is still some general advice which is useful for all cases. These stages are :

(a) A state of war on the outside, while the heart on the inside is pure.

(b) A superficial response to sin, with shallow thought.

(c) A state of total inflammation, in thought, senses and heart. It is divided into two parts. One part has the material of sin at hand and it is possible to commit, and in the other part the material of sin is far away and the person tries to get hold of.

(d) The fourth state is where sin becomes a habit.

## D) HOW DO WE ATTAIN PURITY?

There are several means which are summarised in three items:

**First : Protective means**, which prevent the person from falling, and gives him immunity against sin. They are outlined in escaping from sin and its causes, and on the other hand strengthening one's spiritual life so as to repel sin by his nature.

**Second: Treatment means**, in case a person actually confronts sin, either by a passing thought, or by a persisting one for a light or for a strong desire.

### (FIRST) PROTECTIVE MEANS

#### (1) KEEPING FAR FROM THE FIELD OF SIN

You know the doors from which sin comes to you. Do all you can to close these doors. Also be far away from all kinds of excitements and causes of sin, specially those which concern the senses of sight, hearing or touch, or which concern different improper readings, evil meeting or mixing, or the places which encourage sin or which carry special impure memories.

**You should know that man is a creature who is prone to be affected by one of the two states, good or evil. Never think in yourself that you are strong enough and able to resist.** You are not stronger than prophet David of whom God Himself said "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart" (Acts 13:22). In spite of that, he could not withstand one scene and he fell (2 Samuel Chapter 11). You are not stronger than Samson, a man of super strength, who knew of the deceit of Delilah, but could not stay away from her, and for her sake he broke his vows, and destroyed his honor and dignity. You are also not stronger than Solomon who was the wisest man of his time, and yet women (his wives) turned him away from God. About this particular sin, Solomon said "She has cast down many wounded, And all who were slain by her were strong men" (Proverbs 7:26).

**Dear brother, never think that fleeing is a kind of cowardice or fear. Fleeing is the first and basic treatment to these impure wars.** Remember that Joseph the righteous, a model of chastity and purity, escaped from the wife of Potiphar, and that his fleeing was a kind of heroism. Nobody said, or will ever say, that his escape affected his integrity.

Jesus Ben Sirach says "Never trust your enemy" (Sirach 12:10). As well never trust your body. As it is natural for iron to rust, evil desires are born from the body. **Do not trust the body even when it appears calm. In one moment or in one hour it sometimes completes what it did not do in several years. It always plans quietly its readiness to attack!!** St. John El-Dargy said "When the cunning fox wants to catch a bird, it pretends it is asleep or even dead. Once the bird comes near, it jumps on it to kill and eat. Likewise, the 'evil of sexual immorality', stops its attacks

on the body in order to deceive the soul from watching it, and it falls. **Do not trust in the nature of the body, until you meet Christ.**

**Beware of a right hand blow from the devil. First he deceives you, and then hits you with it.** With it he portrays for you false heroism, using poisonous logic, by saying "If you were a real hero, come down fight and win". No, dear friend, it is a lost cause. You may use all your might as the war intensifies, and you still fall down. Listen to Solomon the Wise - concerning the sin of impurity -when he asks in astonishment "Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? (Proverbs 6:27, 28).

**Even if you win a superficial victory and do not actually fall, do not imagine that you have won a complete victory. You might have been contaminated during your fight, certain thoughts might have settled in your inner mind or in a hidden corner in your memory, which will come to haunt you when you are weak or tired.** A person who enters the room of a wheat grinder in clean clothes, and does not come near anything in the room, comes out of the room with his clothes covered with tiny particles of ground wheat, without him realising that. Also if a man dressed in white and wrestles a man covered with coal dust or mud, even if he wins and wrestles him to the ground, the result would be that his whole beautiful white robe is contaminated with the coal dust or the mud. **That is how the exposure to youthful excitements, certainly affects us as they leave their traces behind.**

\* Solomon the Wise calls the man who is aware of, and avoids the causes of sin, a wise man, and calls the person who trusts himself as an ignorant man. He says "**A wise man fears and departs from evil, but a fool rages and is self-confident**" (Proverbs 14:16).

Once an elderly teacher was passing by a monastery with his disciples when he discovered a certain stumbling block. He refused to spend the night in that monastery. His disciples asked him "Even you father are afraid?". He answered "By nature I do not fear, but why fight a rotten fight".

Know dear brother, that the causes of sin and its fields, if they do not leave immediate effects on the person who mixes with them, may leave a slow and insignificant effect, which grows in him unnoticed, and appears later on. The will which does not fail suddenly, it may weaken gradually. Do not touch an impure object "Escape for your life! ... Do not stay anywhere in the plain" (Genesis 19:17).

**When we advice a person to flee from stumbling blocks and excitements, we mean perpetual fleeing.** Some people started a life of purity with a crushed soul feeling its weakness. They used at the beginning to flee and be very cautious. But when they went a long way on the road of purity and felt they were strong, they thought they are immune enough against sin, and may be less cautious, and should not fear the stumbling blocks and the excitements. They then started to enter into the field of sin unafraid, and without feeling it, sin crept to their souls, and discovered that they lost their first resistance.

**There is another way in the return to mixing with the fields of sin - not via feeling strong - but by compulsion, as a counsellor and a teacher.** This kind of person starts by listening to the sexual problems of others, their stories of how they fell, and how they are fought. He might

also add to that some special study to this subject. As a result of all that, his mind might be filled with sinful thoughts, and impious memories which contaminate and trouble him. We advise those people not to carry burdens which they are not spiritually qualified for, and we advise them to be frank with themselves.

This subject needs to be discussed in a teaching convention and come to an agreement upon a policy to deal with. We here suggest as one of the solutions, to refer such problems to qualified people such as the priests to whom people confess, or elderly ministers whose strength and circumstances guard them from stumbling. It is also possible to find people in the different areas of ministry, who give answers to the subjects which others can not deal with. For example, not everybody can give answers to complicated questions on theological problems, which require accurate presentation and sound theological understanding. We rather refer such questions to a specialised person who masters the subject or the like. The same could be applied for many of the sexual subjects.

## **(2) AVOID SPARE TIME**

Spare time is very useful for a person who is advanced in spiritually. He who is successful in prayers, meditation and contemplating in divine matters, gets rid of worldly affairs and gives more time to his spiritual deeds. **But for a person who is fought sexually, and is tired from this matter - for him - spare time is a dangerous enemy and should be avoided.** If his mind is not occupied with sexual desires, at least, it wanders about from one thought to another, and from remembering one subject or the other, until among these he meets a sexual subject, for which he stalls to meditate in. He might deviate in these thoughts, and his mind finds pleasure in sin and he falls. **If you wish to avoid entering into a sexual war in which you may fall, avoid spare time, and continually occupy yourself, so that if the devil comes to you to plant his impure thoughts, he finds no time for him in you.**

If you occupy yourself with a useful matter, you would have won a double benefit: getting rid of sexual attacks and what accompanies them from defiling and troubles, and also the benefit of doing a good deed with which you occupied yourself. **One may occupy himself with the following:**

### **(a) Being Sincere in His Work:**

A hard working student for example, fills his mind with his academic subjects. This benefits him in many ways: scientific superiority, gaining the trust of his teachers, his family, and his friends, preparing himself for a bright future, and satisfying his conscience towards his studies. In addition to all that, he spares himself many sexual attacks and keeps clean thoughts. We notice that the students during their examination weeks, are not subject to sexual falls, as they are in the rest of the year. What we say about the student, we say also about the employee.

### **(b) Readings:**

**A person who is always reading, is filled with knowledge, broadens his background, has active thinking, and at the same time avoids spare time in which he is tempted with sin.** We do not mean spiritual readings only, but readings in all kinds of knowledge in general. By nature, the mind thinks about what it reads, and gets occupied with what it thinks, **as readings enlighten the mind. St. Anthony says "Tire yourself in reading books as it saves you from impurity".** St. Isaac says "Diligently read books and the lives of the saints. Because continuous study, looking in books, and reading about the fathers' manners, improve the quality of your thoughts, and it becomes easy to do what is fearing God in your eyes, and difficulties are solvable".

We also - in this point - want to occupy the mind with any useful subject which prevents him from thinking in sin. Concerning what is to be read - specially at the times when sin seems approaching from far - one should read deep subjects, since light readings may divert the thoughts to other subjects, and may not prevent the sexual thoughts - which jump to the mind also and occupy during his superficial readings. But reading deep subjects require concentration, as the reader collects his thoughts and attention in order to understand what he reads.

**Among the most successful readings are those which look for a solution to a problem, which present a story the mind is eager to know its ending, a subject which is vital for a person to know, or new knowledge which increases the mental wealth of a person.** These four kinds of readings differ in their suitability from person to person, according to whether the subject is religious, scientific, social or literal. They differ also according to the age of the reader, and his mental and spiritual capacity.

Among the religious readings for example, which may benefit in preventing the sexual thoughts, are subjects in comparative beliefs, whether between Christianity and other religions, between Orthodoxy and other Christian denominations, or even between Christianity and science. These subjects, cannot be read superficially, but require concentration in both thoughts and attention, and also stimulate religious enthusiasm and zeal in the heart. They do not only occupy the mind but the heart also and consume some of the stored energy.

We advise those - when left alone, would not read anything - to organise their readings according to special programs, certain obligations, or spiritual exercises, or by joining some evening classes, ... .

### **(c) Social Activities:**

Reading might be a gift of different degrees for different people. While it is of great help to some people, it might be of little or of no help to others. For this reason we suggest other kinds of activities beside reading, of which **social activities** are recommended. **We mean the service of the poor, the sick, the orphans and the widows, helping different kinds of troubled people, and ministering to the needy villages, Sunday Schools, and teaching in general.**

### **(d) Hobbies:**

**One may occupy his spare time with useful hobbies according to his gifts, such as drawing, photography, different kinds of hand works, and pastime games. We can add to that writing poetry, playing music and hymn singing, provided that they have proper spiritual directions.** The person who studies the church chanting for example, takes time in learning them from the leader, repeating them by himself and with others. They take hold of his heart and emotions, and are special comfort to him when he is alone. They give him a chance to integrate with the church and the practical participation in the general worship. They also introduce him to religious circles and new friends with whom he spends spiritual occasions. In all that he would have spared himself from occupying his mind with wrong sexual thoughts.

#### **(e) Sports:**

Our teacher St. Paul said "For bodily exercise profits a little" (1 Timothy 4:8). No doubt that from this little profit, there is a part for those who are fought in the sexual side. Some of whom may have large spare times, in which they do not read, nor practise special hobbies, but may find in sports their useful hobby which occupies their minds and times, spends much of their excess energies, and keeps them away from loneliness which accompany the devil. This is good and let them do sports. Yet, we advise them to chose the good sports' atmosphere with pure colleagues who understand the true sports' spirit. It is worthy for religious organisations to open sports' clubs which present pure atmospheres under the supervision of spiritual persons.

### **(3) ACTIVE PROTECTION**

**Active protection from falling in sexual sins does not only centre on the love of chastity, but also on the advancement in the spiritual life in general.** The person who advances in his spiritual life, in general, hates sin as a whole, grows in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and feels the vanity and conclusion of the whole world. Among other things, he will rise above sexual errors, and other bodily desires. On the contrary, the person who loves the world and all it has of different enjoyments, will yield to sexual pleasures, concluding the bodily desire which he seeks by all means.

**We thus advise - for the protection from the sexual sin - to practise the elevated spiritual life,** which is expressed by our teacher St. John when he says "Do not love the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15). This is what we notice in real life as the youth who attends church, listens to her preaching and instructions, thinks seriously in changing the course of his life to walk in God's road. After improving many aspects in his life, one day he reaches this point which is resisting his sexual errors. The more he loves God, the more he rejects the world and its desires. Again, the more his heart desires the world to come and the everlasting life after resurrection, we - definitely - see him rise above the desires of the body, and his sexual powers elevate, and is able to consume his stored energies in a useful and spiritual manner.

### **MATTERS WHICH HELP THIS SPIRITUAL COURSE:**

**(a) Practising fasting in the ideal way** in which the person resists his bodily desires, and exercises to control his body to succeed in preventing it from desiring certain kinds of food, or in general not eating for a period of certain hours every day, in spite of its craving for food. This practice also increases the will power of the person and his control over his bodily desires, which leads to his success over his sexual side. **However, those who practice fasting and think they have succeeded in it, but still realise apparent failure in their sexual side, we advise them to reexamine themselves and their fasting. They might be fasting just as a tradition without training themselves to control their bodily desires** concerning food. St. John El-Dargy said "**He who fights his sexual desires and does not control his stomach looks like a person who puts off a fire by oil and straw. And he who fights his sexual desires by fasting alone without humility, is like a person who swims in the great sea with one hand**".

**(b) Practice praying:** Gives the mind a kind of a reserved attitude, which makes the person feel ashamed of himself if he submits to an impure thought, and feels ashamed from God when he stands to pray with a sexually contaminated mind. **We advise you dear brother to increase in praying in order that this holy shyness increases in you, and that your thoughts are enlightened by God.** Also by prayers you may gain a special help from God against sexual attacks.

**There is also a vital reason; by prayers you remember the tie between you and God, and feel the presence of a covenant between you and Him which is to live for Him a holy life. Every time you fall in the impurity, you feel that you have broken this covenant.** Some people feel ashamed to pray after they have fallen, and gradually they stop praying. But we tell those people that this is a device from the devil by which he wins a second battle. But you the man of God, **do not leave the prayers because of the impurity of the body. Do not wait to be pure then you pray, but rather pray so that by prayer you attain purity.** If you are ashamed to pray, then know that this shame is useful for you, because it faces you in front of your conscience, in front of God, and in front of what you ought to be, and you come back and rise up.

Occupying the thoughts in meditating into theological subjects, repeating Divine verses, reciting known psalms, and also chanting praises, hymns, and religious chants, is a good exercise in this case. In that St. Isaac says "**Much talks about the meaning of virtue, renews every hour the desire of the soul to attain virtue**". He also says "Such as the continuous sparking creates fire, the perpetual meditating in Divine subjects, creates heat". Again he says "If you neglect meditation in the righteousness, the desire for it diminishes in your eyes".

**(c) Meditating in the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he bore for us, and in his giving life wounds for our salvation, create in us shyness and reverence.** Meditate in these sufferings and tell yourself "How can I enjoy these impure desires and "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5)". Say what Uriah said to David "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing" (2 Samuel 11:11). **St. Augustine said "There is no remedy against sexual immorality thoughts like meditating in the suffering of my Lord Jesus Christ and His death"**.

**(d) Practising confession in the ideal way** which we spoke about in detail in the subject of confession. Do not be ashamed to unveil your thoughts to your spiritual father. By doing that you receive great Divine help: First, because the 'devil of sexual immorality' is defeated when he is exposed, and secondly via the advice and instructions of your spiritual father and his prayers for you, and thirdly, due to humility in front of God when you confess your weakness which makes God's help arrive to support and accompany you.

**(e)** With confession, it is very useful **to have communion from the Divine Sacraments**, if your spiritual father permits you to do so. **By communion the person who struggles against the attacks of the desire, receives a great power over his enemies. St. Macarius the Great said "By communion you are guarded from the enemies and he who neglects this sacrament, the powers of darkness overcome him"**. St. John Chrysostom said "Let us return from this table (the communion) as lions with hearts full of the fire of love, from which the devils tremble". We have already spoken in length about the subject of communion in the chapter about communion.

**(f)** It is very useful for the life of purity **to read the lives of the saints**, because it gives you ideal examples of superior quality. One is affected by their lives and is attracted to their traditions, his soul will rise by itself above the bodily desires and will walk in purity without toil. Reading sexual stories excites this desire. But, reading the lives of the saints work in the opposite direction as it inspires in the reader the love of virtue and of pure life. St. Isaac says **"Very desirable in the ears of the humble**, is listening to the life stories of the saints, like the water to the newly planted plants. It should be pictured to you how God cared for them, like good medicine for the eyes. Remember them all day long, meditate and think about them, and you learn to be wise like them".

**(g)** It is also useful **to read books about the ascetic life and despising the vanity of the world, and spiritual books in general**. They direct the wishes of the person and his aspirations towards a heavenly holy course, make him hate sin, and search for the salvation of his soul. **The benefit would be more if these readings accompanied spiritual exercises.**

**(h) Readings about eternity and the last judgement** are also useful. A person who is not bound by love to God, may be bound to Him by fear. Even though, fear is lower in degree than love, but is suitable for our subject as a first step. The Psalmist said "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10). St. Augustine said "Fear prepares a room for love. Thus if there is no fear, it is not possible for love to enter". St. Anthony also said "The fear of the Lord is the head of wisdom. When light enters a dark house, it disperses the darkness and lightens the house. Likewise, the fear of the Lord drives away ignorance when it enters the heart of a person, and teaches it virtues and wisdom".

For this reason dear brother, read about death, last judgement, the life to come, and the punishment of the wicked. Read about the soul, its future and its state in the place of its stay awaiting the last day. Read the Book of Revelation, and the fathers' commentaries about it. Attend funerals, walk in the processions for the dead, and go and give condolences to the mourning families. Do not quickly lose the deep effect on your soul from all that, but rather remember it when you sit with yourself. Think about your own prospect, and do deeds which bear fruits worthy of repentance.

(i) What is useful also for the life of purity for a person, **is reading the stories of pure personalities, who were tempted by sin, but refused it with amazing strong determination. They did not allow themselves to submit to sin**, not dismissing it because of harsh circumstances pressing on them, but resisted to bloodshed, striving against it (Hebrews 12:4), and obeyed God till death. We referred to some of these stories in this subject, not for the reader to imitate them to the letter, but to present for him images of superb characters.

We add to this kind another super kind, which **are the saints whose families forced them to get married, but lived with their wives as their sisters, and left this world without touching a woman**. Some of them stayed like that for tens of years, such as St. Macarius the Great, St. Amoon, St. Yehness Kama, St. Dimetrious El-Karram the Patriarch, and others. Among those who were forced to get married by their masters are St. Samuel the confessor who was kidnapped by the barbers. His atheist master tied him to a woman slave to shepherd the camels together, and stayed like that for years. Another example is St. Malkhos whose story was written by St. Eronimos.

(j) In this context, it also helps to read the stories about repentance. We mean the stories of men and women who repented after living impure loose lives. Such as the story of St. Maria, daughter of the brother of St. Ibrahim the hermit, St. Mariem the Egyptian, St. Bilagiah the hermit, the loose woman who was rescued by St. Bisarion the disciple of St. Anthony, St. Jacob the striving, St. Augustine and others.

(k) It is also useful **to read the stories of the saintly women**, either the martyrs, the nuns, the stewardesses, women doing religious or social activities, or famous women in general who are known for their heroism, courage, and holiness. We meant from this kind of reading to alter one's opinion about women. Some men are so much troubled by sexual problems to the extent that they cannot imagine women to be but for mens' use. This kind of reading may change their opinion about women and make them realise that women are capable of achieving great goals in many areas, just like men.

(l) **Practice humility**, and you will save yourself from the attacks of sexual immorality, which result from the departure of the Divine care because of pride. Humility defeats the devil, and we mean humility from all sides, in front of God, people and yourself. Some brothers posed a question to St. Aghathon concerning the attacks of sexual immorality. He answered "Go and cast your weakness in front of God and you find rest". St. John El-Dargy said "Whoever wants to conquer his body by fighting it, his fights are in vain. Because if God does not demolish the house of the body and builds the house of the soul, the person strives and fasts in vain. But strive, know your weakness, go to God to help you, and you will receive the grace of chastity from God".

(m) **Satisfy your emotion of love in a noble way**, in order to escape from the sexual attacks which result from satisfying the deprived needs of love for the heart in a perverted way. You may do some social services, be kind to everybody, enjoy pure sincere friends with whom you exchange co-operation and sacrifices, or by the full spirit of love which tie you and the members of your family, or even by being merciful to animals, or by joining active societies which serve the public like the society of first aid, ... etc.

(n) Increase in making the sign of the cross on your chest, forehead and your heart. It is the sign "of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14). It is the sign from which the devils tremble and escape. It is not enough to make the sign of the cross from the outside, but make it with faith, and you will feel the tremendous power which accompany it.

## **(SECOND) TREATMENT MEANS**

We have advised the reader to escape from the attacks of sexual immorality by all his powers, and to keep far away from them. But what does he do if he meets the attacks at a time: because of his carelessness, or when they come across him out of his will? **We here present the treatment which suit the stage of sin presented to him:**

### **(1) STAGE OF SLIGHT OUTSIDE ATTACK**

The measure by which we know if the attack of sexual immorality is strong or light, is in the heart, and the hand controlling it which is the will. The thought of sexual immorality comes via the senses, from the inner mind, or casted by the devils. If it does not find response in the heart, it passes away like smoke, without leaving traces. Up to here, the person is pure and no sin is committed. The thought could not excite the movements of the body nor the pleasures of the senses, or arouse the feelings of the heart. Yet this passing thought might intensify and persist frequently to the person's mind. Such intensified attacks are still from the outside and do not result in impurities yet. The person can drive all of them out as the Apostle says "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

**In the beginning of the attack, the thought of sexual immorality, wants to discuss and negotiate, to give itself a chance to grow.** This negotiation with the thought is a mere willful act for which the person is spiritually responsible. The key is in the hand of the will. While the thought knocks on the door from the outside, the will may drive it away or may let it in. The wisdom and the whole wisdom is to drive this enemy away, as it is dangerous for the safety of the heart, mind and soul, all together.

The devil may deceive the person by saying "Search all matters and choose the best. What is wrong in that? You do not need to enjoy the thought but discuss it, to know from where it comes, what does it want, what is its destination, does it pose a danger, think of what happens if you allow it in your heart and then drive it away". ... Beware my friend from this poisoned logic. Not every matter is for searching. There are obvious matters, not for searching. You do not need to examine a scorpion in your hand in order to know that it is a scorpion. You only need to observe it from far away to realise it is a scorpion. Wisdom dictates that you do not examine it, but to kill it, or at least flee from it quickly. If you hold it in your hand to examine it, it will bite you and throw its poison into your body. That is exactly the thought of sexual immorality. **St. Aphraam El-Soriany said "As you drive a dog away, it is your same response to the 'devil of sexual immorality'"**.

**These thoughts of sexual immorality which knock on the door of the mind may and may not be known to you. They will soon unveil their nature. This kind of thoughts require**

## **caution, awareness and realisation.**

A person has no excuse in not driving away and quickly the clear unveiled thoughts of sexual immorality. But the veiled thoughts, one should drive them away as soon as he realises what they hide. Every one has his own experience, and is able in many cases to know the thoughts which enter his mind in an innocent robe, far away from sexual immorality, but soon develop, model and change until they becomes plain sexual subject. One should learn from his past experiences and his previous attacks. How wise was this elder who said "I do not remember the devils beat me twice, for one matter".

As an example to these thoughts, a certain personality you know which the enemy fights your desires with. With this personality you have normal, clean and unclean memories. The devil might start by reminding you of the virtues and good deeds of this personality. Then little by little he leads you to the unclean memories and the attacks of the desire start. If you know from your past experience that the starting thoughts are but introductory to the thoughts of the desire, and each time you get these thoughts from the devil, they end with the same conclusion, you ought to repel all the introductory thoughts which do not appear from the outside as unclean. But it is your duty to repel all the thoughts which come to you about this personality, as long as they lead you to the dark point in your relations.

We said that the key is in the hand of the will, and it is free to repel the thought out or to invite it in, whether it is passing by or persisting. We add that the wills differ in their strengths and in their weaknesses. There is a will that can get rid of a passing by thought, but if persists and keeps on knocking, it weakens and opens the door for it. Our advice to this kind of will which cannot resist the thought is to flee from it. The means of fleeing are discussed in the following section.

## **(2) STAGE OF MILD INSIDE ATTACK**

**This kind of attack begins by either of two means:** In the first means, the outside thought comes to a person's mind, and finds in his heart a potential desire. It mixes with and begets from it sensual pleasure. By that sin would have started in its early stages. In the second means, this thought does not find in the heart any desire. Yet it does not despair, and keeps persisting and knocking on the door of the person's mind asking to negotiate with it. If the will weakens and opens the door, it enters and casts down its goods, which are the objects for pleasure to the senses, and the sexual desire is aroused. The two kinds whether caused by a potential desire or by an outside desire, having reached this stage, will end to one result, which we shall now describe and show how to resist.

This passing sensual pleasure is very weak at the beginning, and can be repelled and got rid of by the will. It might be just a pleasure for the thought, outer or inner sensual pleasure, or a desire in the heart. ... It starts as a pleasure felt by the person, who also feels he is erring and should resist it. Up till here, the attack is a mild inner one, and could be avoided by a little courage of the mind and some might in the will.

## **We Have the Following Advice for this Case:**

**(a) If you get this sensual pleasure from a particular thought, right away, change the course of your thoughts:** either by thinking in something else, by reading, praying, chanting a tune, hymn or a praise, or by any other means which takes you away from this thought. If you are changing this unclean thought by thinking in something else, choose a kind of a deep thought which occupies you, attracts your attention and lets you forget the first thought. Obviously, if you think in an unimportant subject, your mind will wander back to the unclean thought. If you have chosen reading, or praying to flee from the unclean thought, let it also be done profoundly, and do not worry if you could not concentrate at the beginning. The matter may need a transition period, until you forget the sexual thought, or be occupied away from it. Continue reading and praying even with un-concentrated mind until you collect your thoughts. If you prefer a chant, hymn or a tune, let it be a "sad" tune, or the hymn which requires attention to control its musical vibrations, or the kind your soul loves, desires and sticks with.

**(b)** If none of the above means help you, and the thought keeps haunting you and the pleasure increases, leave the place and search for other things which may occupy you. If this is also not useful, mix with people, listen and talk to them, and necessarily you shall get rid of the haunting thought, as you cannot reckon the two matters together.

**(c)** If the thought attacks you when you are with others, break your silence, and talk to them.

**(d)** If the thought attacks you from reading a certain subject, leave the reading at once, even if it is religious reading.

**(e) If the source of the sexual pleasure is sensual, such as touch, sight or hearing, flee away from its cause.** Go away from this place, turn your sight from the stumbling scene, and escape from the harmful hearing. If you cannot do that in a particular case, at least occupy your thinking at that time with a serious matter, since occupying the mind, delays the sensual feeling, or at least it would not be centre in the sexual meaning and the war subsides.

**(f) We do not wish to mention a particular means, but rather you choose any means you see it will help you in your escape from this thought, and turn you away from the accompanying pleasure.**

**(g) Beware not to listen to the deceit of the devil, nor to the deceit of the mind dosed by the sensual pleasure, and think that you are negotiating with the bad type of thinking, as if you are negotiating with an enemy which you like to destroy, and like to expose all its corrupt means.** The thought does not care if you expose its corruption and peril. This is all clear, and you know that from the beginning. Even at the end - after a while - you succeed in repelling the sexual thought, you have already been defiled during the time between the coming and the repelling of the thought. With your wish to repel it, you have already enjoyed its lingering. This contradicts your love to God and your love to the life of purity. **Get rid of the thought quickly, and do not discuss it, even as an enemy.**

Get rid of the thought quickly because the war - though from inside - is still light, and the

will can control the thought and wishes to repel it, while it is there. **Time - in this case - is not on the side of the person. As time goes on, the bad thought which gives pleasure to the person, strengthens and prevails, while the will gets weaker.** The desire to repel the thought subsides, and the angels around the person start to depart from him. The Divine Grace may also leave the person. All that is caused by his leniency with sin, not repelling it rather desiring it inside.

All that leads the person to the third and serious stage. In that he is condemned by God because - with all his will - he took himself to the point of danger. He resembles the children of Israel who disobeyed God and kept the Canaanites, caused the destruction of the people of God and tempted them to worship foreign gods. But with the courage of the heart, you should say with the Psalmist "Early I will destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all the evildoers from the city of the Lord" (Psalm 101:8). The city of God here is the inner Jerusalem - your heart.

### **(3) STAGE OF SEVERE INNER WAR**

**Which is the most serious stage ..., by which we mean the stage where sexual pleasures prevail on the person, so that he leans towards completing the sin, and his will cannot refuse it. He fails between two serious enemies, one is from the outside and the other from the inside, in spite of his will.** He realises his error, wants to leave it but cannot, because the sensual pleasure attracts him to it. This stage of the sexual sin is the most severe stage, and many who go through this stage fall in the sin, and cry to God because of their weaknesses.

What do we say to you dear brother, who goes through this stage. We do not want to rebuke you because you took yourself to this danger. Rather we have compassion on you and God Who knows the human weakness, and the strength of the enemy attacking you, He by His mercy understands your situation, and is able to have mercy on you.

**What is important for you - even in this case - that you do not despair, and not let the enemy deceive you that you have fallen, the matter is completed, and you have to actually execute the sin.** Do not listen to this rejoice from the enemies, but rather strive to the last breath of your will. We advice you to flee from the material of sin if it is near you, and not to seek it if it is far from you. Try in this case to escape loneliness to where people are, and whom presence prevents you from doing the sin. Try to flee from being alone with the person, the enemy attacks you with. In the worst cases, it is better for you to fall alone than to let another fall with you, and then you have committed two sins instead of one, and be responsible for the enormous results of sin.

### **DO NOT DESPAIR ...**

**Trust that if all your body was inflamed with sin, and you tried to flee from doing it, you have with God a crown for your striving, and God does not forget that for His sake you deprived your body from a pleasure it desired.** Remember dear brother, that among the strongest means for overcoming the harsh sexual attacks, **is to have a strong courageous heart in fighting them.** The source of this strength is to trust that God is with you, and He does not deliver you to the hands of your enemies, because He desires the salvation of your soul. St. Pachonius, the father of

the communal monastic life said "Be strong in heart, and attain courage from the beginning, to be able to stand the anger of the dragon, as it is difficult to fight it from the beginning if you were not ready. That is to make you weary of the road from the beginning ... Be strong in heart, **and fight like a mighty person in the attacks of the desire.** Throw away the frailty of the heart, in order that laziness and lack of faith may not get hold of you, and your enemies find you a prey. **Let your heart be a lion's heart**".

Put in your own room objects which rebuke you and remind you of God, and brings you back from despair, such as some bible verses, holy pictures, and divine books.

One can also get rid of this state of despair by changing the course of his thinking using one of the means which we mentioned in the previous stage, as the storm of the body subsides gradually. It will subside in any case. Hence resist ... .

## **E) AFTER THE FALL**

There are two kinds of fall: one from carelessness and the other from weakness. The first kind is very serious as the person deprives himself from the Grace of God. But in the second kind, God looks at it with mercy and extends His hand with help to raise up the fallen person and washes him from his sin, if he repents. Beside that, in either cases of fall, one feels disgusted from sin, and regrets committing it.

**Make use of this regret and this disgust which follow the fall, by walking into a new and a straight life. Even if your fall is repeated, do not despair as long as it is due to weakness.** It was said about a brother who lived in a monastery, that the severity of the attacks used to make him fall frequently in the sin of sexual immorality. He kept hating himself and kept patient in order not to leave his monasticism. He used to practice his worship carefully and in his prayers he used to say "Lord, You know my bad state, and my grief. Pick me up Lord with or without my wish, because I am like the mud who desires and loves sin. But You are the Almighty, make me end with this impurity. It is not strange that You have mercy on the saints, because they deserve this mercy. But who am I, not worthy. Lord show me the wonder of Your mercy, because I submit myself to you".

He used to repeat these supplications every day, whether he did or did not sin. One day, the devil got aggravated from his hope in this prayer, and appeared to him face to face, while singing his psalms and said to him "Are you not ashamed at all to stand between the hands of God, and utter His name with your defiled mouth?". The brother told him "You strive and I strive. You let me fall in sin, and I ask the merciful God to have compassion on me. I beat you to that until I die, without losing hope in my God. I do not stop preparing myself against you, and we shall see who wins, you or the mercy of God". When he heard that, the devil told him "From now on, I shall not return to attack you in order not to make you earn a crown as a result of your hope in your God".

The devil left him from that day, and the brother returned back to himself weeping and crying for his previous sins. If his thought told him "Do not cry", he answers his thoughts by mentioning his previous sins, and if his thoughts told him "There is no hope in you, you made too much sins", he says "God's mercies are vast and he is happy to see the dead alive and to find the lost".

**In the course of your fall, apply as much as you can the protective means we previously mentioned.** If these means do not produce fast results, do not despair, and do not let the devil picture your desire as stronger than your nature, or that it is impossible for you to overcome it. Realise that the matter needs time until the active protective means produce their fruits. Know also that cleansing yourself from sin and attaining complete chastity, are matters which require patience and do not come all at once. Hold fast in hope, pray much, and be far away from the causes of sin, and you will definitely obtain chastity, even after a while, as long as you are striving for it. The enemy wants you to fall frequently, even in the actual sin, to despair and to submit yourself completely to him, and that there is no use from striving.

**Beware of the 'devil of shyness' who comes to visit you after the 'devil of sexual immorality', to prevent you from uncovering your sins to your father of confession.** Beware very much from this deceit, and confess your sins in the fullness of its horror. Know that there are sins, one gets comfort by just confessing them. The fathers said "**In particular, 'the devil of sexual immorality' is defeated by exposing him**". Also know dear striving brother that your father in confession is also human, and he understands human weaknesses. But even more, he has many experiences in this matter, from hearing confessions of other people and the stories of their falls. He will also listen to your confession with great compassion, not with disgust, as you imagine. Be truthful in your confession, do not delay it, and let not the devil deceive you to wait until your state improves before you go to your father in confession. Your state will improve by your confession. You also cannot guarantee what happens if you postpone your confession. Maybe, your state will worsen, or you may fall more in sin and your ties with sin strengthen.

## F) DREAMS AND BODY DISCHARGES

For a young man - a body discharge - is a semen liquid which discharges from him during sleep. There are two instances: in one, the discharge is not accompanied with a bad dream, and this is natural and is not considered a sin, and you should not be alarmed when an excess fluid to the need of the body discharges.

In the second instance, the discharge is preceded with an impure dream. The human will has very little or nothing at all in that, but mostly in this instance, it is the result to a previous bad desire. The Church considers the body discharge, in the two instances, as breaking the fast, and the person should not take the Holy Communion in the next morning of the discharge. According to the book of Leviticus, the person is unclean until the evening (Leviticus 15:2-5). He also should not enter the altar and touch the holy articles. But it does not prevent him from his ordinary prayers and personal worship, and preferably he should wash and change his inner clothes.

One should confess his body discharge and state whether it occurs frequently. **For those suffering from the body discharge, we present the following points:**

**1 - There are body discharges which result from stored or suppressed sexual desires,** or from bad images in the inner mind, from memories, or from unclean information retained in the memory. All this require spiritual treatment during the day. One should also care during the day and avoid the causes of sin from which he dreams. If one cares to be clean in his conscience life, it is rare for him to have unclean dreams, and if he has them, he would feel uncomfortable and wake up.

**2 - There are discharges which result from the body conditions, such as too much eating,** too much fatty food, too much sleep, giving the body more rest than it needs, or sleeping on an extra ordinary comfortable bed. These causes are easily treated, and the more one perfects vigil and fasting, the less he has body discharges.

**3 - Body discharges may result from the way one sleeps.** When a person sleeps on his back, his spine warms up, and if he sleeps on his stomach his genital members warm up. The

correct way is to sleep on the right side of the body.

4 - The cause may be the inner clothes. They are not supposed to press on the sensitive parts of the body.

5 - To avoid body discharges, it is better not to drink too much liquid before going to bed, to avoid filling the bladder during sleep.

6 - It is also better not to go to bed until one actually needs to sleep.

**7 - Long prayers before sleep help a great deal, in order to cleanse your bed with prayers, and surround yourself with angels during sleep and to guard your chastity.** On the contrary, unclean thoughts may occupy the mind before sleep, and sometimes cause body discharges during sleep.

8 - One should also be careful not to let the bed covers rub against his body during sleep. He should also mind the cold weather which makes him curl in such a way as to press on some of his members. Again, too much warmth may cause body discharges.

9 - Body discharge may result from too much fear from its happening, as it occupies the mind in an exaggerated way.

**10 - It may also result from the devil attacks by which he wants to disturb the person,** prevents him from taking the Holy Communion, makes him fall in despair, or presents him with unclean thoughts which attack him later on: the wilful sexual immorality. **The fathers advise by forgetting about the bodies by which the person was assaulted in his sleep, in order not to cause him attack when he is awake.** St. John El-Dargy said "When you wake up do not think of the un-cleanliness which you imagined in your sleep, as this is the aim of the devil from the unclean dreams".

## **G) IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS**

**A. If the attacks of the desire intensify, search yourself well in order to know the intakes from which they enter, and close them.** Stand on the causes of their occurrences and eliminate them. If you do not find a sexual cause, search yourself for the haughty thoughts and vainglory (pride). If you find them creep to your inner dwelling (your heart), humble yourself and submit to God to take them away from you. If you do not know other causes, realise it might be the envy of the devil. God also permits this case to keep the person humble, as St. John El-Dargy says.

**B. Among the most important means to help you in your striving against the attacks of the desire, is the bravery of your heart and its courage. That is keeping high morale spirit.** The weak fearful heart cannot stand in front of the enemy. And when the devils see that in a person, they escalate their attacks, and rejoice over his fall. But the strong hearted person is like the strong fortress which does not fall easily. In these attacks, get yourself the heart of a lion as our father St. Pachomius said.

**C. Never despair. Rather let the trust in God fills your heart, depend on Him and have faith in His power against such impure vicious attacks.** Be far away from despair, and trust that help is coming to you even if you reached the fourth quarter of the night of your striving. The Lord says "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation" (Psalm 91:14-16). **St. Aphraam El-Soriany says "The eagles collect on the corpse, and on the despaired soul collect the devils".**

**D. It happens sometimes that a striving youth against these attacks, is completely convinced in his mind that it is wrong to meditate, enjoy or submit to the thoughts of sexual desires. Yet he craves inside himself to the sin and its conclusion. The devil uses this craving as a substance to spread despair in the soul of this striving brother. He tells him for example "Now your thoughts are defiled to this extent, and your desires became already impure, what is the use of your striving?!"** Even in this situation do not despair. The craving to commit sin is the law in your members, which our teacher St. Paul stated (Romans 7:23). Do not despair dear brother, but "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!" (Psalm 27:14). Do not doubt that "The Lord is at hand" (Philippians 4:5).

**At the beginning of your spiritual life, and the beginning of your striving towards a holy life, do not expect yourself by its nature to repel evil, hate sin, and gets disgusted from the desire.** These are spiritual steps which you reach after toil and striving in the road of the spirit. **Put this in your heart; do not despair even when you are in the depth of sin, and the depth of sensual pleasures which your mind oppose and is convinced of their wickedness. We stress on this point as it is among the means of your victory.** Persist in your fight using more the weapons of the spirit which St. Paul mentioned "The breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:10 - 17).

**E. It happens sometimes that the devil manoeuvres his plans to trick the striving person. He does not approach from the point of sexual desire, else it is repelled and the plan**

**fails. But he takes his time to make his preparations. Using deceit and tricks, the devil dresses the desire the robe of virtue, in order to cover his plan.**

"And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). He might dress it the robe of love, mercy, or zeal for saving the soul. As an example: a young man volunteers to give lessons to a young woman who may or may not be poor, pressed by feelings of love and kindness. Or a youth who starts a relation with a girl whom he feels living in a suffocating sinful atmosphere, and he aims from that to save her by opening her eyes to her conditions. He may be right in his feelings of love, mercy and holy zeal. **It may start with these holy feelings, but deviation occurs either due to human weakness, or by Satan who finds a substance for sin he can use to trip this person.** In any case, we ought to do good, but beware else it is on the account of our spiritual lives. We have to flee evil and all the places of Satan.

**F. Realise dear brother, that you are not the only person who strives against the desire,** and walk in the road of virtue. You have many colleagues, who are fighting Satan, and resisting to bloodshed, striving against sin (Hebrews 12:4), and made their banner "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

**G. Prepare yourself from now on, sanctify your thoughts and your members in order to deserve to put on the white robe, and play the harp of the spirit, and sing the new song** in front of the Throne of Grace, on the heavenly Mount Zion, with the one hundred and forty four thousand celibate. The song which John in his revelation said nobody could learn except those "who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. Those are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:1-4).

## **Prayer**

Our Lord God, Great and Holy, who created man in incorruption and made him like You and Your image, to be a holy temple for You. Offer me grace by which I become clean and pure to be a dwelling for You. Take away from me all what does no please Your Goodness. Lord, sanctify, purify and cleanse everything in me, take away from my heart all impurities, purify all my senses, and preserve all members of my body. Fortify me from the world temptations. You created me, You alone know my weaknesses, and You know all the many evil around me in this world, and the stumbling blocks which come across my life. Prepare me with Your Grace to a life full of purity and goodness, leash all my desires, and give calmness to my body.

My Lord God, Who rebuked the wind and there was a great calm, rebuke now the winds of the desires which harm the ship of my life. I have refuged to You after I failed to control my ship in

the sea of the world, perplexed by the gusts of temptations, and the heavy winds of the desires. I haven to You Lord, to rest under Your care, and dwell in the secret place of Your Most High.

Forgive all my sins and transgressions. Do not deal with me according to my many sins and the ignorance of my youth, but forget them and do not deliver me to the hands of my enemies. Guard my life pure, by Your Grace and not by my effort. Hear me Lord by the intercession of the host of all Your pure saints. For thine is the Glory, for ever. Amen.