

Building your Prayer Shield

Dear Member,

Congratulations on taking sexual addiction firmly by the throat and pleasing God with the prudential use of your 'free will'. You now understand that alone it is a battle you cannot win. As a Catholic, you recognise that if you fail in this effort the devil will drag you into Hell. This is not a game and this is not subject to compromise.

However, what you have done so far represents a first step towards sanctity. Only a few brave men are willing to take up their cross and embrace it, as exemplified by Jesus on Calvary – you are now counted amongst them. So never, stop picking up your cross!

Before you can look into understanding and defeating your addiction, you must find a way to lessen the power Satan has over you. You are already aware that you have found no reliable means to beat your addiction. To this end, you must now look to Our Lady and the tools she gives us to combat sin. You all know how to pray the Rosary; but do you truly recognise its power? Our Lady committed herself to saving sinners. She promises that even the most hardened sinner can gain her intercession so long he prays with true contrition and asks for her assistance.

However, I already know that one Rosary is inadequate to defeat the temptation of lust. I have lost count of the number of devotional prayers, novenas and Rosaries said during the throes of despair. I am certain you will all feel the same and it is imperative that we recognise that until now we have used our prayers in desperation – rather than in attack.

Today, we are going to build a prayer shield and use it to 'push' lustful thoughts away. This is not a defensive action but an aggressive demonstration of our faith in the power of God over evil. Through prayer, we will succeed.



In any combat strategy, a good leader will use his experienced and battle hardened troops & weapons to repel any unwanted invaders. In effect, we will employ in our fight against temptation and its associated sexual triggers this tactic. However, to use these weapons effectively we must first have a shield to provide our first line of defence against that first 'thrust'. I will use my own Prayer Shield as an example of what is required.

This shield recognises that I work from home. When I worked for an employer, away from home, my prayer shield was entirely different. The key is to identify set times of the day when you can safely slot in a prayer or devotion. This will be your first opportunity to start building healthy God centred routines and habits. It is also important not to over commit yourself to a routine that becomes burdensome or unworkable.

Therefore, if you barely pray at all, I would suggest you begin with just morning and evening prayers and The Rosary when you finish work (or before the evening meal). I used to recite the Rosary in the car instead of listening to the radio – so that gave me two / day. Once you have established this, consider adding The Angelus and perhaps a litany to St Joseph or Our Lady. Beware, when you add something; allow time for it to become habitual before considering doing more.

MY DAILY PRAYER SHIELD

0600	Morning Prayers & Angelus	8 min	To defend me from the temptation to daydream in bed
0700	Little Office – Matins / Lauds	20 min	Reparation for sins of the past
0800	Rosary – Joyful	15 min	Petition and thanksgiving for graces to avoid impurity today
0820	Litany to St. Joseph	5 min	Petition for guidance against impurity
0825	Litany to Our Lady	5 min	Further petition for Men of Hope against impurity
0830	Memorare / Offering to Mary	4 min	Personal request for consecration of eyes, ears & mouth to Mary
1030	Little Office – Prime / Terce	10 min	Reparation for sins of the past
1230	Rosary – Sorrowful	15 min	Conversion of sinners
1500	Little Office – Sext / None	10 min	Reparation for sins of the past
1700	Rosary – Glorious	15 min	Family and general intentions
1730	Little Office – Vespers	10 min	Reparation for sins of the past
1900	Little Office – Complin	8 min	Reparation for sins of the past
2100	Night Prayers / Contrition	10 min	Thanks for today’s graces and a good examination of conscience

This prayer routine has developed over a period of months. Where activity causes me to miss a timeslot, I try to do it at the earliest next opportunity. If I do forget or miss the devotion, I do not ‘beat myself up’. Working demands and other events can interfere, so I am always ready to modify my schedule. Just be

certain you are not making excuses and finding reasons for not praying as you intended.

I do have to force myself to submit to this routine. It sometimes feels burdensome and boring and I often find myself reciting prayers whilst thinking about pornography.

My advice is to just plough on and recognise that the devil hates you praying and will do anything to get you to stop.



If I fall into sin, I keep on with the prayers no matter how worthless I feel. The devil will try to convince you it is pointless until you are back in a ‘State of Grace’. **That is a lie.** It is not hypocritical; it is demonstrating to God, The Father, that you need His help and forgiveness. The devil wants us to despair and stop praying. He is happiest when we throw up our hands because everything seems too hard. That is how he wins souls...

In addition, by **uniting my suffering** to save others through daily prayer, I am giving value and worth to my efforts. **Self-esteem is critical** in building a strong and durable shield. As more Fellowship members unite in prayer, more shields will be added to this wall. The growing number of ‘prayer donations’ listed on the Rosary Crusade page demonstrates the success of this.

That is why it is essential for all members to visit the page daily and see what you can donate to help others in their struggle against sexual addiction.

Additionally, I have a number of short ejaculatory prayers that I use to ward off unwanted thoughts or visible temptations as they occur. As soon as an unwanted thought commences I think of Jesus bleeding on the cross or I relive the scourging but with me delivering all the blows. I may also say aloud or in my head (if in company):

“For the love of Jesus and in reparation of the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the conversion of poor sinners”

If I am still being hit with temptation, I will start reciting another Rosary and offer that benefit up to *Men of Hope*. Recently, I recited seven Rosaries when all I could think of doing was watch pornography. I was on my knees for nearly 90 minutes and throughout these prayers, I was being plagued with thoughts to stop and just give in to the **inevitable**. Although I felt totally out of control and a hypocrite, I just kept on going until things eased. Eventually the temptations did stop – if only from weariness. I honestly believe that the power of the prayers and of Our Lady’s intercession stopped me giving up – I stayed in control despite my continuous desire to ‘fall’. I also lost my voice...better that, than my soul!

This may not work on every occasion but you must persist. This persistence demonstrates your faith in God and the power of prayer. Further, by counting and submitting your prayers to *Men of Hope* you demonstrate a belief that your suffering has value that can help others – if only you willingly get up on the cross and accept it. I know of one sinner who said over 30 Rosaries during a three-day ‘personal Calvary,’ and he survived. It is just a matter of how much you want it.

Your prayer shield must have become habitual before you can realistically start exploring aspects of your addiction. This is all about creating a safe and God centred ‘reflex’ to an occasion of sin. You must give your brain time to condition itself to this form of response. Practice makes perfect...

So what do I do when prayer fails and I commit a sin against purity?

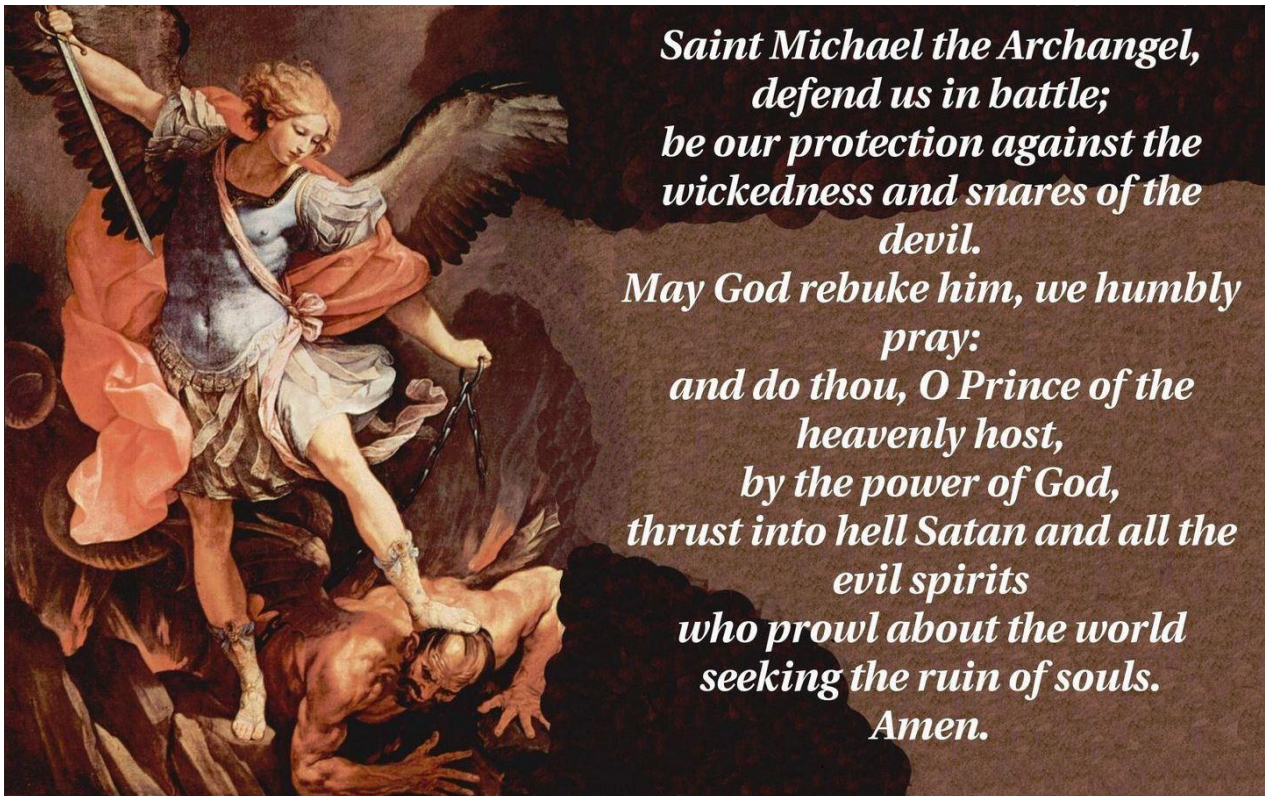
The hard truth to accept is that secretly we really do want to commit the sin – we really do want that short-term explosive pleasure or the lingering anticipation of pleasure. Concupiscence is the devil’s gateway into forcing us to compromise God’s love. It is no good me trying to convince you to pray harder or more often. It is no good me reminding you that you need to examine every fall meticulously to identify how to avoid it ‘next time’. That is for you to do. I cannot hold your hand and make you stop sinning...but Our Blessed Mother can!

For me, the answer *was* to pray more often and to start believing God has a purpose for me. I do not allow myself time to get bored. I fill my inactive hours with spiritual reading and prayer and other meaningful activities. I never stay in bed once I have woken or when my mind starts to wander. I always have recourse to prayer when feeling tempted and I always message my support when I am in ‘peril’. That is how I use the ‘free will’ given me by my loving Father.

Finally, do not forget your Guardian Angel. Learn to acknowledge and pray for his help daily – this should be part of your morning and evening prayers. This is the reason God gave you one in the first place – so use him! Ultimately, if you can get your prayer routine properly established and have stopped calling yourself a hypocrite when you fall, then you will be ready to put in place more important defensive weapons.

To complete this unit:

1. To have identified the **vulnerable times** of your day where prayer could help you to combat the assaults of lust and temptation.
2. To have committed to a daily prayer timetable.
3. To have identified an ejaculatory prayer for those ‘near’ occasions of sin and ‘self-denial’.
4. To be actively using a *temptations diary* and notifying your mentor if you are struggling.
5. To update the Rosary Crusade webpage daily on the number of your devotional prayers and ‘self-denials’ and to count and offer up all those occasions you deliberately avoid an occasion of sin.
(Most members fail to understand this is the most important aspect of our apostolate)
6. To acknowledge that the power of your prayers to help others, assists you in your journey to sanctity and gives you ‘self-worth’.
7. To have completed any previous outstanding work and reviewed your last chat session.



Every prayer, sacrifice or self-denial offered up to *Men of Hope* could save a soul – so don't let them go unrecorded!