

BREAK TIME STRATEGIES FOR PURITY

1. Geographic relocation: Many times, returning to our homes and especially our old bedrooms becomes a very strong trigger for impurity. The experience is described as returning to a “rut” or immediately being positioned in deep “tire tracks”. Possible solutions include:
 - a) Staying at a rectory
 - b) Staying with a friend
 - c) Combination of a and b

2. Maintaining strong and consistent prayer life: When this falters, as it easily can on a vacation period, it often has very clear and persistent effects on purity and even on virtue in general. Determining how your prayer life will be arranged without the structure and ease of seminary life, especially with all the demands and uncertainties of the holiday period, is very essential. Satan does not take time off; if we do, he is lying in wait.

3. Use of Technology: This is an area that has many facets and like #2 above, requires a clear plan and the ability to stick to it.
 - a) Smart phones: Even when your phone has Covenant Eyes, it can still be a trigger for old habits to resurface. Creating a technology fast or restriction while away from the seminary can be a very helpful strategy. For example, no use of the phone after x pm at night or only using it in the presence of other people.
 - b) PCs and other devices at home that are not Covenant Eyes protected. This can be an easy fix but involves a somewhat difficult side issue. Asking your parents/siblings to change the password on all devices and not tell you what it is can be a very effective. The side issue is are you willing to deal with the obvious question of why this is necessary. How important is your purity to you is the question to answer first.
 - c) Video games: Obviously, games that include or focus on violence and sexuality should be totally excluded. Even other use of games without this focus should be limited so that this area does not become a compulsive habit.

4. **Accountability Partners:** Many seminarians have accountability partners, but they are often not available as they are at the seminary, even if they are in the same town. Arranging a clear schedule of contact ahead of time by phone, facetime or text/email on a daily basis can help. Even without a face to face contact, this relationship is important and can be more than just a purity check-in. It can also include how prayer life is going, what challenges family or social life may present, etc.
5. **Movies of the Mind:** Even without viewing pornography, prior mental images from previous porn viewing, movies watched, encounters out in public, can still be sources of temptation. When these images come to mind, it is important to have an immediate antidote to counter them. The best and most readily available option is to say a prayer that you consistently say on a daily basis. Also, spiritual images are also very helpful such as placing the temptation into one of the nails in the cross of Jesus. Or if you wear the cincture or medal of the Angelic Confraternity, to touch it and pray for intercession from St. Michael, St. Thomas Aquinas, etc. The immediacy and consistency of the intervention is most important.
6. **Remote Triggers:** Besides avoiding the more direct and proximate images that can trigger impure responses such as movies, advertisements, etc., it is very important to address more remote cues. These can range over a variety of possibilities, so it is important to know yourself well enough to understand what people, places, or things are likely to send you toward a slippery slope of impurity. These can include such things as mood (tired, angry, bored, stressed); location (your old bedroom with the door closed, etc.); time (when is the time when you are most vulnerable to impurity?); day of the week (are weekends when you are more likely to give in to temptation or perhaps the night before you know reconciliation is easily available the next day?); situation (no one else is around or you just spent some alone time with an old girlfriend even if nothing inappropriate happened). Handling these remote triggers becomes part of a pro-active

program of preventing the problem from the very first sign of a difficulty rather than later on when the struggle becomes much more challenging.

7. Schedule: Along with number 6 above, plotting out a schedule on a daily basis, as much as possible, is one way of reducing both remote and proximate triggers. For example, you may be pretty sure that one or two days of the break, you will be at home by yourself with nothing to do and not a lot of options. Make plans to get out of the house as much as possible. Go to a library, get a coffee at Starbucks, take a walk, go to a gym and exercise, volunteer for some service activity. Do something other than simply vegging at home and allowing any number of triggers to overwhelm you (idle minds and all that).

8. If failure occurs, seek out Reconciliation as soon as possible and resolve again that you will be even more diligent in both avoiding temptation and being aware of the triggers that are more likely to lead you back into sin. A firm determination to change and a deep desire for virtue are powerful tools along with prayer and sacrament to reverse old habits.

*Sacred Heart of Jesus, Son of the living Father, by the mercy of the Holy Spirit,
have mercy on me, your beloved sinner.*