

Becoming a Man After God's Own Heart

A LENTEN JOURNEY FOR MEN

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PARADISUS DEI

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HELPING FAMILIES DISCOVER THE SUPERABUNDANCE OF GOD

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THE WEEK OF ASH WEDNESDAY



Orientation: Self
Exercise: Time Evaluation
Sacrifice: Favorite Food
Covenant: Sexual Purity

“Let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

(Romans 13:13-14)

ORIENTATION: Self. The most fundamental orientation of the human person is towards self. One of the first actions of a developing infant’s brain is to distinguish itself from everything else. This self-awareness will determine the individual’s interaction with the world and, ultimately, with God. An objective understanding of our orientation towards self is the starting point for our Lenten journey.

DAILY EXERCISE: The evaluation of time. Time is the surest measure of the orientation towards self. All of us have received a set amount of time from God. None of us knows how much. How we spend our time is how we spend ourselves. If we spend a disordered amount of time on our own pursuits, our lives will be characterized by selfishness, which is manifest through the Seven Capital Sins (pride, lust, greed, envy, anger, sloth and gluttony).

DAILY SACRIFICE: Favorite food or drink. The means for rightly ordering our orientation towards self is penance. Since sex and food/drink are the two most sensual pleasures, they are most frequently disordered at the same time. Therefore, a sure means of helping control the tendency to lust is to control the consumption of food and drink.

COVENANT: Sexual Purity. A balanced orientation towards self is dependent upon rightly ordered passions: pride, lust, greed, envy, anger, sloth and gluttony. The temptation to lust is particularly strong for men in modern culture. Make progress in relating to the temptation to lust and you will make progress against all your passions.

The Orientation Towards Self

First Lenten Exercise: Analysis of Time

“Christ, yesterday and today, the beginning and the end. Alpha and Omega.
All time belongs to him.” (*Easter Vigil*)



PRINCIPLES

Time is a gift from God. Therefore, God receives the first fruits (ten percent) of our time—2.5 hours/day.

“It is not good for man to be alone” (*Genesis 2:18*). We should spend twice as much time with others as we do by ourselves.

“Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh” (*Genesis 2:24*). The fundamental communion is the family. We should spend three times as much time with our family as we do with others.

EXERCISE: ANALYSIS OF TIME

- Gather detailed records of the use of your time for one week.
- Be specific. Note what you were doing while driving. Note whether lunch was alone or with others; whether it was business or social, etc.
- Categorize the use of your time according to the three fundamental orientations as indicated on the accompanying worksheet.
- Work hours should be calculated exclusive of transportation to and from work and lunches during the day, which are considered separately.
- Lunches during the day are calculated as work time if it is a “working lunch,” social time with others if taken with work associates (without working) and personal time if taken alone.
- Unless transportation time is specifically used otherwise (i.e. prayer/business/social) it should be considered as personal time.
- Absolute certainty regarding the categorization of time is not as important as an accurate picture of how our time was spent.
- Note the variance between personal use of time and a balanced orientation.
- Determine two specific steps to be taken to live a more balanced orientation.

FIRST LENTEN EXERCISE: ANALYSIS OF TIME

ORIENTATION	ACTUAL	BALANCED	DIFFERENCE
TOWARDS GOD			
Mass			
Scripture Reading			
Private Prayer			
Family Prayer			
Other Spiritual (including TMIY)			
Total Time Spent towards God		2.5	
TOWARDS OTHERS			
Towards Spouse		1.0	
Household logistics			
Discussing children/household			
Meals with spouse alone			
Private time with spouse alone			
Towards Children		2.0	
Helping with homework			
Activities (including transportation)			
Basic chores			
Entertainment (excluding TV)			
Other			
Towards Others		1.0	
Social			
Sports related			
Work Associates			
Other			
Total Time Spent towards Others		4.0	
TOWARDS SELF			
Work Related		8.0	
Work at Job			
Work at Home			
Working Lunch			
Required Entertainment			
Other			
Personal		2.0	
Meals by self			
Media by self (TV, Internet, music, etc.)			
Reading			
Household activities by self			
Transportation by self			
Other			
Sleep		7.0	
Personal Hygiene		0.5	
Total Time Spent towards Self		17.5	
TOTAL TIME			
		24.0	

The Covenant on Sexual Purity

“I will live in sexual purity according to the sixth and ninth commandments and I will take whatever action is necessary to safeguard sexual purity for myself, my spouse and my children.”



FREEDOM. The first three covenants of TMIY are designed to give men freedom. Christ promised to set his disciples free: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (*John 8:32*). The freedom which he promised was the freedom from sin: “He who sins is the slave of sin” (*John 8:34*). St. John identified the tendency to sin as the triple concupiscence: “the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life” (*1 John 2:16*). The concupiscence of the flesh includes all the passions or Seven Capital Sins: Pride, Lust, Greed, Envy, Anger, Sloth and Gluttony. These passions are present in every person. When one increases, they all increase. When progress is made against one, progress is made against all.

The first covenant of TMIY is designed to give men freedom from the interior passions by tackling the temptation to lust, which is a particular problem for men in our culture. The consumption of pornography has exploded. It is striking at the heart of authentic fatherhood. It is striking at the heart of the family. King David struggled with the sin of lust. It wrecked havoc with David, his family and his kingdom. Eventually, he overcame it to become “a man after God’s own heart” (*Acts 13:22*). God wishes to give you the grace to overcome the temptation to lust.

There are seven steps to obtaining sexual purity:

- Enter into a relationship with Christ in the Eucharist and ask for the grace to see women as he saw his mother at the foot of the Cross.
- Remove yourself from temptations against purity.
- Moderate your consumption of alcohol and food.
- When looking at a woman, focus on her face.
- Encounter women as persons by talking about their families.
- Never publicly speak ill about your spouse or participate in derogatory conversations about women.
- Whenever you’ve fallen, go to confession.