

Reflections
International
Catholic Family Newsletter

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Bringing Light Into a World of Darkness

St. Lucy Yi Zhenmei of China

Advice On Bad Thoughts

Receiving the Eucharist Unworthily

Bible Verse for the Day: He has wiped out the record of our debt to the Law, which stood against us; he has destroyed it by nailing it to the cross. **Col 2:14**

Prayer for Today: The Divine Mercy Chaplet is a powerful devotion given by our Lord to a Polish nun, St. Faustina Kowalska, in the 1930's. It is a prayer of unlimited power, and Jesus promised that He would grant great graces to those who prayed the Chaplet in union with His Will. This devotion asks for the grace of conversion and offers the sacrifice of Christ's own Passion for the salvation of sinful mankind.

Our Lady of Medjugorje Message of January 25, 2023

Dear children! Pray with me for peace because Satan wants war and hatred in hearts and peoples. Therefore, pray and sacrifice your days by fasting and penance, that God may give you peace. **The future is at a crossroads, because modern man does not want God. That is why mankind is heading to perdition.** You, little children, are my hope. Pray with me, that what I began in Fatima and here may be realized. Be prayer and witness peace in your surroundings and be people of peace. Thank you for having responded to my call."

Blessing to All:

By: Richard Pickard

How often we commit the same sin over and over again, tells us of our weakness towards **that sin**. The devil uses our weaknesses to trap us and present such sins as desirable or to make us feel empowered. One sin that most of us are guilty of is the sin of **Pride**. This sin manifests itself in many different forms. The most recognized is the **lie**. Lying is a sin of **Pride** since truth humbles us and prevents Pride from ruling over us. Jesus tells us that our "Yes" or "No" should be the correct reply, when questioned. No need to swear that you did or did not do or say something. Anything more and the devil will use it against us. Billy Graham in his writings of the subject of Pride says, **"Sin gathers up all, that violates a Holy God and keeps souls from entering God's wonderful eternal home. But pride is pivotal—it stirs up everything that is against the Lord, including lying."**

When He sees us walking by His truth, He is blessed. The opposite of pride is humility. We are commanded to seek the Lord and His righteousness and humility (Zephaniah 2:3). This is difficult, especially in our world today. The culture shouts, "Me, Myself, and I!" This is dangerous. Police your own heart. Ask God to convict you when you have your eyes turned inward. Pride comes from looking only at ourselves, meekness comes through looking at God.

The Bible teaches that we should think more highly of others than we think of ourselves (Philippians 2:3). This is made very difficult today by self-help books and seminars, advertisements and entertainment that fill our minds with bolstering our self-confidence. Pride flees when we compare ourselves to God instead of to other people. Humility causes us to look outward to others, and most of all upward to God."



The habit of lying is a **trick of Satan**. He whispers in our ears, "it is only a little lie and by telling it, you won't feel embarrassed or be punished." How often we fall for this. Children sometimes lie, to avoid punishment. If not corrected, they might continue to do this all through their teen years and into adulthood.

Grownups that continuously lie, are really still children in spiritual warfare. Lying is Satan's main trick against all of us. It

started when the devil lied to Eve and continues to this day all over the world. Jesus said "***When Satan lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44)***"

Have you heard Satan's whispers before?

- Satan says...It's okay to steal, its only a small amount of money and you deserve it.
- God says...Thou shall not steal.
- Satan says...It's okay to have an affair with his wife/her husband, no one will find out.
- God says. Thou shall not commit adultery.
- Satan says...Your father and mother are old. You need money for yourself. Don't waste your money on them.
- God says. Honor your Father and Mother
- Don't listen to advice of being good to others. You are IMPORTANT. You make the rules of what is good and bad. The commandments are old and useless.
- God says. 2 Corinthians 5:10 ...For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Start each day with a prayer asking for help from Jesus. ***You can't defeat Satan yourself.*** You need Jesus. No matter what sin(s) you continue to commit...ask Jesus for help. He defeated the powers of darkness, even death on a cross.

John 16:33. "*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*" Jesus is telling us to trust Him and to ask for His help in all things, including repetitive sins.

Start today and each day with a morning prayer.

"Jesus help me to Trust You and Follow You

And each night, end the day with a prayer.

"Jesus, watch over me & my family. Jesus, I Trust in You"

Do these simple prayers each morning and night.

Little known Saint of China

SAINT LUCY YI ZHENMEI OF CHINA

Feast Day, February 19



St Lucy was born in Mianyang, (Sichuan province in China) She was a virgin and martyr and was condemned to beheading for her confession of the Catholic Faith.

Beatification date: October 1, 2000 by Pope John Paul II

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

St. Lucy Yi Zhenmei was a Chinese Roman Catholic saint from Mianyang in Sichuan, China. She was born on December 9, 1815 and was the youngest member in her family.

Lucy was a very pious child, to the extent that she made a commitment to chastity at 12 years of age.

As she matured, she developed a love for reading and study. At age 20, in the midst of her higher education she grew very ill. After her recovery Lucy took her spiritual life still more seriously. She devoted herself to the discipline of prayer with great devotion, assuming a way of life much like that of a religious while continuing to assist in the support of her family. Her mother taught her how to spin, which also became part of her daily life.

After her father died, she lived with her brother and mother, using part of her leisure time to teach the faith to children nearby. The parish priest, who asked her to teach at the school in Mianyang, noticed her devotion and reliable knowledge of her faith. After four years, her brother went to Chongqing to practice medicine, and Lucy and her mother moved in with him.



St Joseph's Cathedral in Chongqing, China

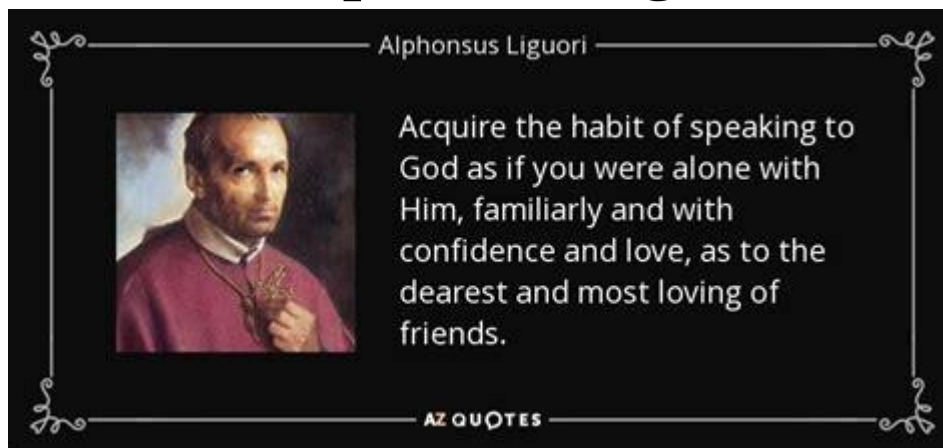
In Chongqing, the priest also asked her to help teach the women in the parish. When she was offered money for her work, she refused to take it and offered her work to God.

A few years later, her brother moved back to Guiyang, during which time her mother died. Full of enthusiasm for spreading the Gospel, she went on doing missionary work. However, for her own safety she decided to stay at the convent of lay virgins. Shortly after, her failing health forced her to move back home again. In 1861, Bishop Hu asked her to teach once more at the convent. In spite of opposition from relatives, she returned to work there.

In 1862, she went with Fr. Wen Nair to open a mission in Jiashan Long, but just then the administrator of Guizhou Province, Tian Xingshu, began to stir up hatred against Christians, which the local magistrate supported. As a result, Zhang TienShen, Wu ShueSheng, Chen XianHeng and Father Wen were all imprisoned and sentenced to death without a formal trial. On February 18, the day of their execution, they met Yi ZhenMei on the road. She was also jailed and put on trial that very day and sentenced to death, because she refused to renounce her faith. The following day at noon, February 19, 1862, she was beheaded. Brave believers took the bodies of all five martyrs to the Liuchonn Guan seminary grounds for burial.

ON BAD THOUGHTS

St. Alphonsus Liguori



First Point. – When bad thoughts are sinful.

1. In two ways men err regarding bad thoughts. Some who have the fear of God, are scrupulous, and are afraid that every bad thought that presents itself to the mind is a sin. This is an error. It is not the bad thought, but the consent to it, that is sinful. All the malice of mortal sin consists in a bad will, in giving to a sin a perfect consent, with full intent to the malice of the sin.

2. Even the saints have been tormented by temptations. The devil labors harder to make the saints fall, than to make the wicked sin: he regards the saints as more valuable prey.

Even St. Paul, groaned under temptations against chastity. "There was given me a sting of the flesh, an angel of Satan to afflict me." (2 Cor. 12-7.) He three times prayed to the Lord to deliver him from these temptations; but in answer the Lord told him that his grace was sufficient for him.

And, for the consolation of timid and scrupulous souls, I will here state that, according to the common opinion of theologians, when a soul that fears God and hates sin is in doubt whether she gave consent to a bad thought, she is not bound, as long as they are not certain of having given consent, to confess it: for it is then morally certain that they have not consented to it. Had they really fallen into grievous sin they would have no doubt about it;

for mortal sin is so horrible a monster, that it is impossible for him who fears God to admit it into the soul without his knowledge.

3. Others, who are not scrupulous, and have lax consciences, think that evil thoughts, though willfully indulged, are not mortal sins, unless the act is consummated. This is an error worse than the former. What we cannot lawfully do, we cannot lawfully desire. Hence it is that a bad thought to which a person consents, has the same malice as the bad act. ***You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery"; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matthew 5:27-28***

4. However, all bad thoughts are not equally sinful: nor have all those that are sinful equal malice. In a bad thought we may consider three things: the suggestion, the delectation, and the consent. The suggestion is the first bad thought that is presented to the mind: this is no sin, but, when rejected is an occasion of merit. "As often," says St. Antonine, "as you resist, you are crowned."

The delectation takes place when the person stops, as it were, to look at the bad thought, which by its pleasing appearance, causes delight. Unless the will consents to it, this delectation is not a mortal sin; but it is a venial sin, and, if not resisted, the soul is in danger of consenting to it: but, when this danger is not proximate, the sin is only venial.

Hence, though a person should not consent to the sin, if he delights in the obscene object, and does not endeavor to resist the delectation, he is guilty of a mortal sin, by exposing himself to the proximate danger of consent.

5. A person may sin grievously by thought in two ways; by desire, and by complacency. A person sins by desire when he wishes to do the bad act which he desires, or would wish to do it, if he had the opportunity: the desire is a mortal or a venial sin, according as the act which he desires to do is mortally or venially sinful. A person sins by complacency, when he does not desire to commit the sinful act but delights in it as if he had committed it.

Second Point – The great danger of bad thoughts

6. It is necessary to guard with all possible caution against all bad thoughts, which are an abomination to God. "Evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. 25-26.) They are called "an abomination to the Lord," because,

as the holy Council of Trent says, bad thoughts, particularly thoughts against the ninth and tenth commandments, sometimes inflict on the soul a deeper wound, and are more dangerous than external acts.

7. Secondly, at the hour of death sinful actions cannot be committed; but we may then be guilty of sins of thought; and he who has had a habit of consenting to bad thoughts during life, will be in danger of indulging them at death; for then the temptations of the devil are most violent, Knowing that he has but little time to gain the soul he makes great efforts to bring them into sin. "The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." (Apoc. 12:12.)

Being in danger of death, St. Eleazar, was so severely tempted with bad thoughts, that, after his recovery, he said: "Oh! how great is the power of the devils at the hour of death!" The saint conquered the temptations, because he was accustomed to rejecting bad thoughts. But miserable the man that has contracted the habit of committing them.

Third Point – On the remedies against had thoughts.

8. The Prophet Isaias says, that to be freed from bad thoughts, we must take away the evil of our thoughts." Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of our thoughts; doing wrong." (Isa. 1:16.) What does he mean by taking away the evil out of our thoughts? He means that we should take away the occasions of evil thoughts, avoid dangerous occasions, and keep at a distance from bad company.

9. Oh! how many young persons of both sexes does the devil gain by impure thoughts and actions.

10. When thoughts against chastity, which often occur without any immediate occasion, present themselves, it is, as I have said, necessary to banish them at once, without beginning to argue with the temptation. The instant you perceive the thought, reject it, without giving ear to it, or examining what it says or represents to you. It is related in the book of the sentences of the fathers, that St. Pachomius one day saw a devil boasting that he often made a certain monk fall into sin; because, when tempted, the monk, instead of turning to God, listened to his suggestions, and began to reason with the temptations.

But the saint heard another devil complaining, that he could gain nothing from the monk whom he tempted; because the monk immediately had

recourse to God for help, and thus he was always victorious. This is the advice of St. Jerome: **As soon as lust shall suggest evil, let us exclaim: The Lord is my helper."**

11. **And when, after asking aid from God, the temptation continues, we must not cease to pray, but must multiply prayers: we must sigh and groan before the most holy sacrament in the chapel, or before a crucifix in our own room, or before some image of most holy Mary, who is the mother of purity.** It is true, all our efforts are useless unless God sustains us by his own hand; but he sometimes requires these efforts on our part, that he may supply our deficiency, and secure to us the victory.

The Grave Danger of Receiving the Eucharist Unworthily

Amelia Monroe Carlson |



A Pew study in 2019 reflected the sad reality that only 31 percent of Catholics believe the bread and wine at Mass actually become the body and blood of Jesus. In other words, 69 percent of Catholics do not believe in the Real Presence, which is the "source and summit of the Christian life (CCC 1324)".

Understanding the Eucharist and the judgment one can bring upon themselves when receiving it unworthily is essential because it's the only sacrament that brings a judgment if it is received unworthily.

To receive any sacrament of the church in mortal sin is to commit a sacrilege, which, as the Baltimore Catechism points out, is "*a great sin, because it is an abuse of a sacred thing.*" However, receiving the Eucharist in an unworthily manner also brings about judgment, as explained in the Bible as well as contemplated by some of the great saints and fathers of the church.

"Whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are ill and infirm, and a considerable number are dying." (I Cor. 11:27-30)

Saint Paul did not pull any punches when he warned of the dangers of receiving the Eucharist when you are in a state of grave sin. Saint Paul did not treat the reception of the Eucharist as a "right" or an "obligation because everyone else is doing it". He did not treat the Eucharist as bread and wine. He did not treat the Eucharist as a "routine" and "something I have to do." He treated it as Jesus. He treated it as the Real Presence of the Son of God and warned against mistreating it. When you receive the Eucharist in an unworthy manner you are mistreating the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Just because one does not believe in the transubstantiation does not make it untrue. One's unbelief does not make the truth a lie. It only brings forth judgment and danger upon the unbeliever.

Canon Law 916 addresses this by stating that a person "conscious of grave sin" should not "receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession." The Canon Law places an obligation on each individual to seriously take an examination of your conscious and your soul before receiving the Eucharist. **Just because you are at Mass does not mean you must receive the Eucharist and just because you have always**

received it each week does not mean you have to receive it if you are in a state of grave sin.

As Catholics, we must get away from just going through the motions and making Jesus a routine. If the Eucharist is sacred enough for us to genuflect before a tabernacle, pray and kneel in its presence during Adoration and profess it as the source and summit of the Christian life then we must know and confess it is more than a routine. It is more than a right. It is more than an entitlement. It is Jesus Christ and it is the body, blood, soul and divinity of the Son of God, of God Incarnate, which we receive.

St. Francis de Sales writes in his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, that receiving the Eucharist gives eternal life and even brings about protection for the receiver. "Our Blessed Lord has instituted the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, wherein is His Flesh and His Blood, that whosoever eats thereof may have eternal life. Therefore, he who frequently and devoutly feeds thereon, strengthens the life and health of his soul that it can scarcely be poisoned by any evil passions. No one can be fed with the Bread of Life, and yet live upon dead affections." (Part II, Chapter 20)

St. Francis de Sales instructs all who want to be devout and faithful to go to Confession regularly prior to receiving the Eucharist to ensure you receive it in a worthy manner and, as a result, receive all the graces that it imparts.

There are also, according to Scripture, consequences during this life for receiving the Eucharist unworthily. St. Paul warns that there were those in Corinth receiving the Eucharist unworthily and therefore they were getting weak, becoming sick, and even dying. (I Cor. 27-30)

Because there is an overwhelming lack of preparation and treating the Eucharist as a routine and a check mark on our weekly checklist it has caused, at a minimum, spiritual weakness within our society, our homes, and our Church.

When the priest holds out the host and says, "the body of Christ" and we respond "amen" then we are saying we agree that it is the body of Christ.

Therefore, if we believe it is the body of Christ then we would make ourselves worthy to receive it. *However, if we do not believe it is the Real Presence, just as 69 percent of those surveyed said, then we are lying when we say "amen" and receive it because we are proclaiming to believe something we do not believe. As a result, we are sinning by receiving it unworthily and are also sinning by saying "amen" and proclaiming to believe something that we do not.* When we have that many Catholics receiving the Eucharist unworthily, therefore not receiving the graces imparted by the sacrament, then why are we shocked that the Church is having such a tumultuous time? *"For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch."* (CCC 1324)



This is My Body which is Given for YOU

**If you have received Communion
Unworthily, Please go to Confession.**

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Bringing Light Into A World In Darkness



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**Powerful graces are received when you
pray the Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.**