



CRUSADERS OF MARY

Newsletter

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How to Combat Sloth

By Dom Lorenzo Scupoli

It is of the greatest importance to make war against sloth. This vice is not only an obstacle on our way to perfection, but it delivers us over to the enemies of our salvation. If you desire to fight this vice in earnest, begin by avoiding all curiosity and vain amusements. Withdraw your affections from worldly things and stop all pursuits that are not in harmony with your state of life.

Strive assiduously to comply with the inspirations of Heaven, to execute the orders of your superiors, to do everything at the proper time and in the proper manner. Do not hesitate a moment in the execution of a command. The first delay brings on a second, this a third, and thus we lose ground. For the dread of labor and the love of ease increase in proportion to their indulgence. Labor becomes so distasteful that a lethargic hesitancy in applying oneself to work, or even the total neglect of work, is the result.

It is difficult to shake off the habit of sloth, once it is acquired, unless shame accompanies this indolent life and rouses us to greater diligence and application. Sloth, moreover, is a poison that spreads itself through all the faculties of the soul. It not only infects the will by making work odious to it, but also the understanding by so blinding it that the resolutions of the slothful usually have no effect. What should be done without delay is either neglected or deferred to some other time.

Mere swiftness of action, however, is not enough. Things must be done at the proper time, and in the most perfect manner possible. A precipitous act, which is done with no regard for its proper execution, but only to be rid of the trouble and to enjoy peace again as soon as possible, cannot be called diligent. It is rather an artful, refined sloth.

This disorder springs from a failure to consider the great value of a good work which is done at the proper time and in a correct manner. Such an act overcomes all the obstacles which sloth places before those who enter the battle against their vices.

Reflect frequently, therefore, that a single aspiration, an ejaculation, a genuflection, the least sign of respect for the Divine Majesty, is of greater value than all the treasures of the earth. Every time a person mortifies his inclinations, the angels present him with a crown of glory as a reward for the victory gained over himself.

On the contrary, God gradually withdraws His graces from those who neglect them, and increases the fervor of the diligent souls until, at length, He introduces them into the joys of Heaven.

You may, at first, find your strength insufficient to undergo all the difficulties and troubles that you will encounter on your road to perfection. Then you must acquire the habit of hiding them from yourself. They will appear more insignificant than the slothful are apt to imagine them to be.

When an act must be repeated many times in order to acquire some particular virtue, and this has to be continued for several days in opposition to countless powerful enemies, begin to do these

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NEWS from India, and more

Chennai, formerly known as Madras, is the capital of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and is on the Coromandel Coast of the Bay of Bengal. Although Christianity is sparsely represented throughout the northern parts of India, this southerly state has a much higher percentage of Catholics. The region is also home to the burial site of St. Thomas the Apostle, who first brought the Gospel to these lands some two thousand years ago.



With an estimated population of 7.5 million (2007), Chennai is the fourth largest metropolitan city in India and one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world. Chennai is densely-populated, and has a bustling economy. It is home to important manufacturing and technology sectors. But the city also has the fourth highest population of slum dwellers among major cities in India, with about 820,000 people (almost 19% of its population) living in slum conditions.

We observed this startling poverty on our daily bus rides between our hotels and the conference site. As we rode along the coastal highway, we looked out on the beach, where

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HOW TO COMBAT SLOTH

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acts as though a few would suffice and your trouble would soon end. Attack one enemy at a time, as though you had but one to encounter. Be confident that, with God's grace, you will master them all. In this way you will overcome your sloth and acquire the contrary virtue.

Use the same method in regard to prayer. If you are to pray for an hour, and the time seems long, begin as though you were to pray but a quarter of an hour. When that is finished, propose another quarter hour, and the hour will elapse imperceptibly.

If, however, during this period you experience a great repugnance and aversion to prayer, cease praying for a while. In a short time return again to the prayers that you had interrupted.

This is also true in regard to manual labor. If you feel that you are overwhelmed by the amount of work before you and by the difficulties involved, do not permit indolence to discourage you. Begin with what demands your immediate attention and do not think of the rest. Be very diligent, for when this is well done, the remainder will follow with much less trouble than you had anticipated.

This is the way to face difficulties. Never hesitate to work. There is good reason to fear lest sloth should so triumph within you that even the first step towards virtue is made impossible, and a horror of work is imprinted on your mind before you have actually experienced the least difficulty in its accomplishment. This is what happens to weak, cowardly souls. They are in continual dread

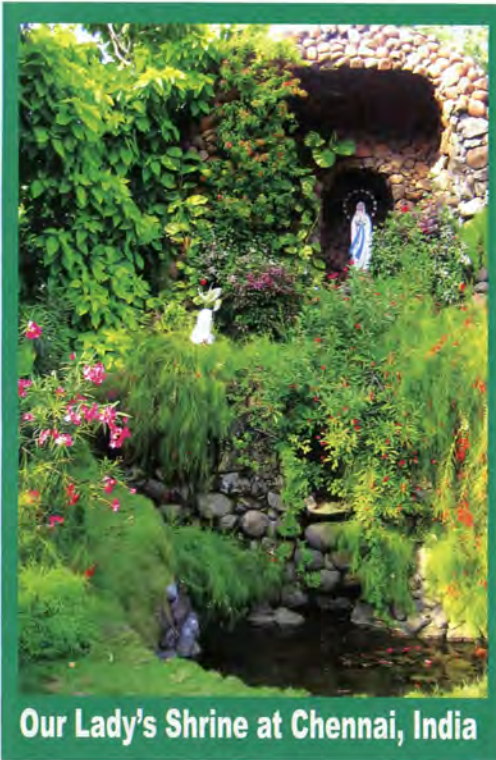
of the enemy, no matter how weak and remote from them he may be. They are ever apprehensive lest more should be laid upon them than they can bear. Consequently, they have no rest even when most at ease.

Realize, then, that in this vice there is a poison which not only chokes the first seeds of virtue, but even destroys those already formed. What the worm does in wood, sloth effects in the spiritual life. It is used very successfully by the devil to draw men into snares, particularly those who seek perfection.

Guard yourself, pray, and do good. Do not defer making your wedding garment until you are called upon to go forth and meet the Heavenly Bridegroom.

Reflect every day on the fact that He Who has granted you the morning has not promised the evening, and, should He grant this, He gives no assurance of the following morning. Spend each day, therefore, as if it were the last; cherish nothing but the will of God, for you will have to render a strict account for every moment.

A final observation should be made. Although you have transacted a great deal of business and have undergone many hardships, you may consider the day worthless and your labor unprofitable, unless you have gained many victories over your passions and your own will, unless you have gratefully acknowledged the benefits received from God, particularly His death on the Cross, unless you have accepted as blessings whatever chastisements the Father of infinite mercy has inflicted as an expiation for your many sins. †



Our Lady's Shrine at Chennai, India

fish vendors lined up in the early morning sun to display their catches. Behind them, beached on the sand, were hundreds of fishing boats in neat rows.

But the other side of this same street was lined with windowless, doorless huts, shanties cobbled together with scraps of wood, cardboard, sheets of aluminum, or whatever could

be scrounged. Often, holes in thatched roofs were covered with blankets. Behind those hovels, and standing a little taller, were the skeletons of cement buildings—housing projects?—as bleak as war, not a piece of glass in a window frame. This entire area stood side by side with a much more affluent neighborhood, which emphasized the stark differences in the lives of those denizens.

To this city of history and contrasts, the Fatima Center came to preach and to teach the entire Message of Fatima.

It was the Asian (but especially Indian) attendees at the 2006 conference at Tuy and Fatima who instigated our visit to India. After the prior conference, they had earnestly entreated Father Gruner to bring the conference to their own parts of the world. We had been astonished then, and trembled a bit at the thought of raising the money to bring such a program to Brazil, or Africa, or India. Little did we know how Our Lady would influence the hearts of so many supporters to assist the program so generously.

This was the third international conference in the past year and a half, and there were many indications to say it was the most successful to date. Over six hundred priests and bishops registered for the week-long conference.



St. Thomas Basilica at Chennai, India.

Great Enthusiasm

The conference opened on Wednesday, January 30, to a spirited and eager crowd. Obviously, alumni had spread the word among their colleagues. The opening speaker acknowledged the particular enthusiasm of the attendees of the October 2006 conference in Tuy, Spain. It was the great response of the Indian priests and bishops which brought this conference to India, where there has always been a great love for Our Lady and a high rate of vocations.

Between conferences, attendees flocked to the tables which displayed Fatima Center literature and sacramentals. This is one of



Many children took part in processions.

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A picture of Our Lady is a highly prized item.

NEWS FROM INDIA, AND MORE
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our first measures of the success of the conference, for we have never given out more literature than we did on this first day. It was a record-breaker! Prayer cards, pamphlets, pictures of Our Lady, Scapulars and Rosaries were scooped up by the boxfull. The priests could hardly believe that we offered so many things they could take to their parishioners. When the Tamil language Rosary pamphlets and other materials arrived on the third day—translated specifically for the conference, there was more excitement. The pastoral sensibilities of the priests were keenly stirred.

The Effect of One Picture

The value of these many pieces of literature may not be apparent to those of us who are surfeited with books, flyers, etc. We are very spoiled in the United States and Canada, and our affluence may dull us to the significance of a holy card, for exam-

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ple. Often, we squirrel such things away, stick them in a book, or the like.

In India, such things as a picture of Our Lord or Our Lady are treasured. Literature is circulated among family, friends, neighbors and colleagues. People do not read a pamphlet, then throw it in the trash. A picture of Our Lady, however humble in format, is not tucked into a book, but revered and displayed with honor. A book is read and memorized, a prayer is memorized and taught to another—custom from an oral culture. The book is digested, shared, passed on. Thus, the effect of one Rosary booklet in India is much more profound than in the United States, as it passes from hand to hand, from friend to friend, and from family to family.

“Pray the Rosary”

Speaking of the Rosary booklet, have you been using your very convenient *Pray the Rosary* booklet which was sent you at the beginning of the year?

It is the only booklet that not just offers scriptural meditations and intentions for each decade, but also teaches all the Fatima prayers. The Fatima Center was grateful that it received an Imprimatur from the Archbishop of

Mbarara. This was a great accomplishment as 2007 came to a close.

So, how many have you ordered for your family and friends? One family we know distributed a hundred. Each child counted out booklets for their friends. They put a different holy sticker on the front cover, and wrote the giftee's name on the cover. Then they handed them out personally. Can you find homes for as many booklets? Call the Fatima Center to request additional copies, 1-800-263-8160, or email info@fatima.org. It would be helpful if you would send a donation to help cover the cost of mailing and four color printing. †

