

# Praying With Temptations

By Father Ryan Browning



**Fr. Ryan Browning** is a former golf professional. After college he became a club professional in Evansville, Indiana and later in West Palm Beach, Florida. During his time in college, he fell away from the practice of The Faith and his personal life hit rock bottom.

He moved to Batavia, Illinois to be closer to family and get a new start. After rediscovering Catholicism, he ultimately joined the seminary for the Diocese of Rockford, where he was ordained in 2013. He is now the pastor of St. Peter Catholic Church in Geneva, IL.

**There are temptations that assail me all of the time;** I feel like giving up. I'm never going to escape their grip. Have you ever had thoughts such as these as you try to live out The Faith? Does it seem hopeless at times to escape the grip of temptation? What I am about to suggest will help in all matters of temptations, but I will specifically address the temptation of lust. Two preliminary considerations:

**First, temptation is not sin.** Jesus experienced temptations in the desert. Since He is God and all sin is against God, He could never sin. Temptation is not a sin. It's what we do when temptation comes that is either virtuous or sinful. It can be sinful, however, to put yourself in the near occasion of sin, so be prudent about what you look at online and watch on television and form healthy and holy boundaries in your relationships.

**Second, we must recognize that sexual desires are not bad in themselves.** God created us as sexual beings to stamp into our very bodies the mystery hidden from all eternity in God. The mystery that God is an eternal exchange of love Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and He has destined us to share in that love. The union of a man and a woman in marriage where the two become one is meant to be a sign of the union of God and man; both are meant to be fruitful. Given the importance of the sign of marriage and sex it is no surprise that this is where we experience the most temptation and confusion in our fallen world and precisely where the evil one will strike. Do not be afraid!

**Our Lord became one of us went through his passion, death, and resurrection to offer us the grace of redemption.** That grace is for us, body and soul. Praying through temptation will help us experience the redemption of our bodies for which we long (cf. Romans 8:23).

**In the grip of temptation turn to prayer - very intentional prayer.** Let's take for example you see a person who you find attractive, and the temptation of lust arises in you. See temptation as a trigger for prayer. When you encounter a temptation pray *"Lord, thank you for the beauty of this person. Give me the eyes to see them purely as your son or daughter. Give me and them all the grace we need to know and love you."* You may also find it helpful to pray the Hail Mary, since Our Mother is all pure. At some point, whether in the moment or later in your prayer time, invite the Lord into your desires and ask him to redirect them toward union with him — that's their purpose.

**When we pray with our temptations, they become a source of grace and transformation.** Does that mean we will not fall into sin again? Probably not. Do not get discouraged. However, we will fall less and God, with our cooperation, will set us free from sin. We may continue to struggle with temptation, but it will become a means of grace and purification for us. God works all things to the good for those who love God (cf. Romans 8:28).

**Be honest with Our Lord.** He knows everything anyways. Enter the battle of the heart and place your hope and trust in Jesus. Be patient with yourself. Recognize the temptation, turn it into a prayer, open your heart to the power of redemption that flows from the Cross, and through grace freedom will be yours.

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