
HOW CAN WE OVERCOME OUR BAD HABITS?

By Fr. Victor Potapov – From Pravmir.com

At the root of our woes lie our bad habits. Habits (or passions) are never passive. They fight against us, and against our happiness and love. If we do not overcome bad habits, they overcome us.

Who we are and what we do, are not one and the same thing. We want to be charitable, but instead we are greedy. We want to be generous, but we are afraid to be so. We want to be free, but we remain dependent. We want to become stronger and better, but we wreak havoc upon ourselves. We want to forgive, but instead we take offense. We want to rejoice over others' success, but instead we envy. We want to love others, but instead are jealous of, and hate them.

What, in our better moments, we want to do, is who we are. Deep down inside, we are real, perfect creatures after the likeness of God.

Love lies at the foundation of the very highest expressions of the human soul. The miracle of creative love elevates man above nature. Love turns us into what we are: in our true, normal condition, we love.

What we do not want to do, but yet do, are bad habits or passions. Voluptuousness, laziness, envy, greed, avarice, and miserliness, distrust, lying, selfishness, taking umbrage, enmity, slander, rancor or remembrance of wrongs, dependency on tobacco, narcotics, games, vanity, and other bad habits are in part inherited, and in part are acquired over the course of life.

There is something pleasing or at least entertaining in many bad habits; otherwise, we would not so easily succumb to them. But ultimately, each of those habits interferes with our being what we are, i.e. with being loving creatures. After all, we can understand that love cannot be conjoined with hatred, envy, avarice, etc. If you think that you hate everyone, envy everyone, are sorry for everyone, and that you love only this person, or those three people, you are fooling yourself. Your feeling is not love. To be a loving person is a faculty of the entire,

whole person. One cannot be internally divided, for some a loving person, and for others, a mean one.

This is something easily noted in life. As a rule, someone with a real family, a family filled with love, has an excellent, warm relationship not only with his wife, but also with his children, his parents, his friends, and his co-workers. This is because he is a loving person.

If, to the contrary, love for one's parents and friends is not in evidence, there will be no real love for one's

wife or husband, for [such a person] is a slave to bad habits, to passions. Yes, God can send him a spark of infatuation, of being in love. However, when under close surveillance by bad habits, that spark will soon die out, and will not burst into the flame of true love.

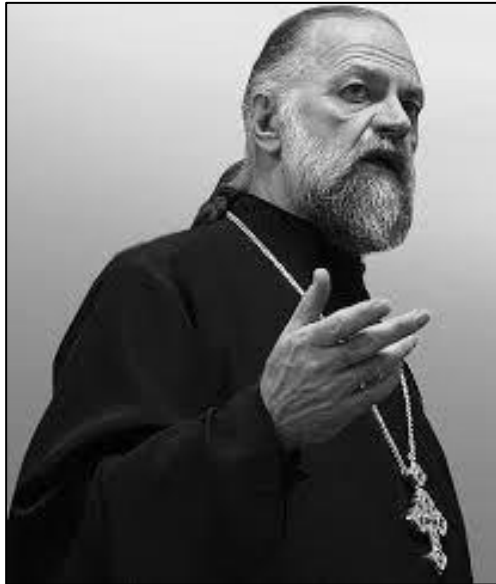
Passions, bad habits, are a sickness of the soul, and like any sickness, bad habits intensify, with one bad habit intensifying another. A person's soul cannot remain static; it is constantly in motion, moving either toward

good or toward evil.

Therefore, to become a true, loving person, one capable of building up and bringing joy to others, it is essential to struggle against one's bad habits, to overcome one's passions and not allow new evil habits to appear.

If we do not defeat our habits, they overcome in us all that is good. The province of slaves to bad habits is a twisted attitude towards things, is slavery and suffering.

Anyone can overcome his bad habits. Every believer who has suffered from some passion or from attacks of obsessive thoughts, knows how much prayer helps in that time of trial. However, he also knows that even more helpful than prayer is confession of that passion, followed by Communion of the Holy Gifts of Christ. The Mystery is a miracle! Mankind possesses nothing more powerful in resolving spiritual problems.



DID YOU KNOW?

- ❖ Most people come to church because of a personal invitation.
- ❖ Only 2% of church-going people invite someone to church in a given year. That means 98% of church-goers never extend an invitation in a given year!
- ❖ 7 out of 10 unchurched people have never been invited to church in their whole lives.
- ❖ 82% of the unchurched are at least somewhat likely to attend church if invited.
- ❖ The top "rational" reason adults seldom or never attend church is they don't agree with organized religion or what they preach (24 percent).
- ❖ The top "practical" reasons for hardly attending or missing church altogether, 21 percent said they don't have time or they don't get around to it.
- ❖ Children and youth who attend religious services weekly, exhibit fewest behavior problems, are more likely to have high-quality relationships with their parents, and are more likely to exhibit positive social behavior, including showing respect for teachers and neighbors, getting along with other children, understanding other people's feelings, and trying to resolve conflicts with classmates, family or friends.



TRUE SUCCESS

By Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos

Many people labor under the wrong concept of success. This is the idea of achieving possessions, status, or power. A person's self-image is measured by what he or she earns or possesses, by what he or she socially can do or economically control. However, the Saints teach another radically different concept of success based on faithfulness and discipleship. True success is measured by the depth of one's personal communion with God, concern for the salvation of souls and the advancement of the Kingdom. A truly successful person is a saint – one who seeks wholeness in God, who strives to grow in the image of Christ, who finds fulfillment and happiness in loving and serving others for God's glory.



FROM THE SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS

"What is a merciful heart? It is a heart on fire for the whole of creation, for humanity, for the birds, for the animals, for demons, and for all that exists. By the recollection of them the eyes of a merciful person pour forth tears in abundance. By the strong and vehement mercy that grips such a person's heart, and by such great compassion, the heart is humbled and one cannot bear to hear or to see any injury or slight sorrow in any in creation. For this reason, such a person offers up tearful prayer continually even for irrational beasts, for the enemies of the truth, and for those who harm her or him, that they be protected and receive mercy."

St. Isaac the Syrian, 7th century

**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF BISHOPS
OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA**



For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

— Colossians 1:16-18

August 16, 2017

To the Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

Recent tragic events in Charlottesville, Virginia, have highlighted the presence of un-Christian rhetoric and violent actions within our communities. At the same time, the response to these events by our civil leadership has unleashed a nationwide debate which has created a certain moral ambiguity, which in turn is fostering further division. Such a climate requires a clear response from the Church.

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America joins people of faith and good will across the United States, Canada and Mexico in unequivocally, unreservedly and unambiguously rejecting words and actions which perpetrate, support or encourage hatred, violence, racism, white supremacy, white nationalism or neo-Nazism. As Orthodox Christians, we believe that every human being is a child of God, created in His image and likeness, and therefore we are all brothers and sisters whatever our race, nationality or creed.

At the same time, we also reject the climate of condemnation of the individuals carrying out these heinous activities. Indeed, Jesus rebuked his disciples when they suggested that he violently retaliate against his enemies. "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." (Luke 9:55-56). The Church offers to all—without exception—not condemnation but a path to forgiveness and peace in Christ.

As the Orthodox prayer of confession says: "O Lord God, the Salvation of Thy servants, gracious, bountiful and long-suffering, who forgives us concerning our evil deeds, and desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his way and live: Show Thy mercy upon Thy servants and grant unto them an image of repentance, forgiveness of sins, and deliverance, pardoning their every transgression, whether voluntary or involuntary..."

We reject hatred and violence, and as Orthodox Christians we are also committed to the ministry of reconciliation. We encourage our clergy and faithful to hold fast to the Christian message of healing, salvation and love offered by Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. At the same time, we exhort our clergy and faithful to reject any attempts by individuals or groups to claim for themselves the name of "Orthodox Christian" in order to promote racism, hatred, white supremacy, white nationalism or neo-Nazism. This is in keeping with the Holy Gospels, the decisions of the Holy Councils and the experience of the Saints.

We remind the faithful that the Orthodox Church in America does not restrict membership to those of a particular race or nationality and has historically welcomed all, going back to the Alaskan Mission which embraced the indigenous peoples of that land and continuing to this day in the multicultural and multi-ethnic context of North America.

Brothers and sisters, Saint Justin Martyr, writing at a time when Christians were persecuted in the second century, said, "We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies." May that same spirit be ours today as well.

With our paternal love and blessings,

The Most Blessed TIKHON, Archbishop of Washington, Metropolitan of All America and Canada