

The Fasting of the Eyes

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The image has invaded our current world and has now become the basis of our world. The image now occupies the widest space in all fields. The era of the printed word has passed, giving way to an age where words must accompany images to be taken seriously.

The image invades the human mind in today's world, saturating memory, overwhelming consciousness, and burdening the intellect. The constant barrage of images affects our thoughts, both conscious and subconscious, burdening our imagination and leading to impure thoughts, which serve as a gateway to sinful acts.

The danger of images in this era comes from addiction to the use of social media, which demands constant engagement of the eyes and other senses. Information is now inseparable from one or more images, often accompanied by sensational or explicit news. This kind of content, driven by human curiosity and the thirst for knowledge, garners high readership. Information is conveyed through visuals, audio, and explanations, often accompanied by emotionally charged music, compelling the viewer to store what they see, hear, and read.

This constant storage, combined with the rapid flow of information, is a deliberate attempt to embed messages in the human mind, and the impact begins directly and involuntarily.

What makes matters worse is that we rarely hear joyful and positive news that contributes to optimism and raising morale. Instead, the majority of the information circulated is often personal, insignificant, if not absurd, or unconstructive. This includes the dissemination of news related to celebrities, deviants, or criminal activities. This kind of information is fleeting.

Images provide fuel for the imagination, which extracts from them what feeds the passions and drives individuals towards sinful acts. Persistent thoughts triggered by emotions, awakened by images, lead individuals into sin.

In our spiritual teachings concerning impure thoughts, we distinguish three levels. The first involves external attacks on our thoughts, where impure ideas seem to intrude from outside, for which we are not held responsible unless we intentionally invite these ideas into our minds. The second involves entertaining these impure thoughts or accepting their presence, marking the beginning of the path towards sinful acts. The third involves embracing these thoughts and committing the sin itself.

The onslaught, joined with various other factors, incites the imagination to attract impure thoughts and delve into their details, starting from what has already accumulated in the mind.

Living in this age of information consumption places new burdens on us as humans, subjecting us to a different form of enslavement. After grappling with the accumulation of material possessions and market offerings, we are now burdened with something even more challenging, as information consumption enslaves our minds, alters our convictions, and takes root deep within our subconscious minds against our will. This makes falling into tribulations a matter that is constantly present and easy.

Material consumption is relatively easy to manage since it exists outside of us, compared to information consumption. When we recognize material consumption's dangers, we can discard it, rid our house of it, and distance ourselves from it. Your empty pocket, or your inability to buy a product due to financial struggles, aid in that struggle. However, managing information consumption, particularly images, necessitates a genuine spiritual, physical and intellectual battle to prevent it from gaining control. It requires God's grace and time to cleanse our memory.

We often waste time chasing the endless stream of information, most of which revolves around gossip. People nowadays spend a significant portion of their time using their smartphones and similar devices, preoccupied with trivial matters that keep them distant from meaningful interactions with their loved ones. It has become commonplace for a group of people to gather in a café or at home, each engrossed in their own cell phones, even as they sit together.

What is strange is that people lament a lack of time for activities that would truly benefit them or aid in ridding them from their addiction. They also complain of boredom despite being occupied with an abundance of information. Their problems take a back seat in their lives as they immerse themselves in unproductive pursuits. They remain adrift at sea, unwilling to dive beneath the surface in search of the pearls hidden in its depths, returning to the spiritual emptiness that slowly erodes them.

Why do I say this? Because the situation raises various concerns: epistemological, psychological, social and spiritual. It is imperative for believers and their conscious to recognize these issues and find ways to free themselves from this addiction while mitigating its negative effects.

As believers, our fasting and abstinence from food are not enough. Fasting must extend to many other aspects of our lives. In the past, fasting of the eyes from impurity was not emphasized as strongly because images were not as prevalent as they are today. Moreover, the direct and explicit nature of sin was more apparent then.

We need to introduce ascetic practices related to the use of modern media and information consumption. We might consider setting specific times for information consumption, limiting it before and after receiving Holy Communion and on fasting days, utilizing this time for prayer, beneficial reading, or acts of love.

Being human, created in the image of God, demands that we live with inner freedom that makes us masters of our actions, rather than followers led by external influences.

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