

How to Conquer: A plan for the holidays

Since you have no pressure of homework or exams, the holidays can be a good time to put order in your notes, go over some of them, make summaries, revise topics which did not understand well, do exercises in some subjects, prepare material for the next year, especially if you will be a candidate. Write a book, a play and/or poems.

In general:

1. Do not become one more in the crowd. You are the master of your destiny.
2. Always keep busy. To rest is not to "do nothing"; it is to change activity.
3. Get sufficient sleep. 8 hours. (not 10!)
4. Genuine freedom requires virtue; i.e. more effort leads to more fun.
5. Use your imagination and initiative.
6. Develop a critical attitude to distinguish between beneficial and harmful activities. For example unsuitable free time activities create bad habits such as laziness and untidiness.
7. Watching movies and series should be controlled and planned in advance.
8. Internet and video game use should be done prudently and with a plan.
9. Do not indulge in commercial entertainment, i.e. there is no need to spend much money in order to enjoy yourself.
10. Do not endanger your moral life. Specifically, before watching a specific movie the normal measure of prudence is to find out whether it is morally sound e.g. from Wikipedia or Internet Movie Database (IMDb).

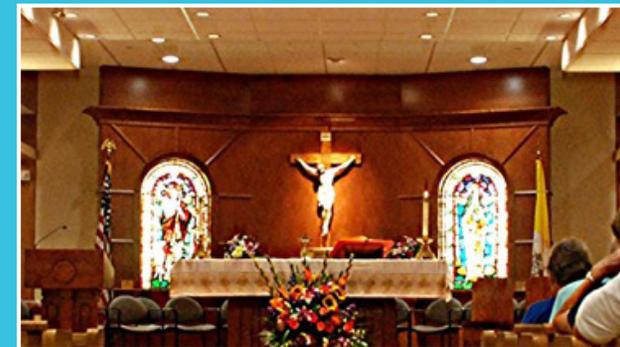
Renew your Mind

Finally, replace the images and past behaviors that inevitably torment one during recovery with God's love. Use the near occasions of sin in daily life as grace-filled moments. In those moments of weakness, when one ordinarily might be tempted to mentally objectify and exploit someone, STOP! Take advantage of that moment and choose to use it for a good end. Pray for that woman or man whom one may be inclined to objectify, in reparation for the damage that one may have caused that person. These images and thoughts do not have to be times when we fall. Rather, allow them to be portals into God's amazing transcendent grace, which can carry the repentant addict's past sins and draw him to a deeper level of intimacy with God.

Social

Identify a need in your neighbourhood or nearby community and organise a community outreach activity e.g. a cleanup, a book donation center, used soccer boots for street kids, etc. Visit the poor or the sick (alone or join those organized by your church or a club). Visit friends and relatives (avoid Malls unless you will do something specific there). Teach younger kids Catechism, Life Skills, English, Mathematics). Device games or competitions for younger children. Prepare a show for a birthday, for the family, for relatives or friends (sleep-overs may not be advisable). Get to know as many neighbours as possible. Ask parents, relatives or friends how you can be of service to them.





A PLAN FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Learning how to type. Do house repairs (e.g. broken furniture; painting walls; hedge cutting). Cleaning area around the house or surroundings. Improve access to the house. Repairing bikes. Making posters. Mechanics. Electronics. (Check YouTube for ideas on repairs and skills). Gardening, planting, harvesting and digging.

Artistic

Learn to play an instrument or improve your already acquired skills. Make designs or drawings or paintings and sell them. Design and send Christmas cards and/or birthday cards. Build or buy and decorate a Christmas Crib. Photography. Origami.

Cultural

Learn a new language or improve a known language. Get to know the city (e.g. by visiting museums, estates, etc.). Reading Novels: mystery, adventure, biographies, travel, humour, classics. Watching and reviewing movies (after checking their suitability). Visit museums. Start a blog. Collecting items, e.g. coins and stamps.

Sports

Play sports with others or organize games with other people, even if you have to travel so as to play. Soccer, basketball, swimming, tennis, jogging. Learn a new sport e.g. golf. Also helpful are outings, camps, excursions and other outdoor games.

Others

Classify family items like photo albums. Join a youth club. Wash cars. Cook. Etc.

Prayer

Develop a daily prayer life. This may include any of the following: morning, evening and night prayer, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in a nearby Church, reading Sacred Scripture, praying the Holy Rosary or other authentic devotions, meditation and readings.

Sacraments

Go to confession and receive Holy Communion frequently. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) states: "Holy Communion separates us from sin.... For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins..." (n. 1393). Likewise, reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation must be a continual part of the recovery process (as often as is needed), so that the Eucharist may indeed preserve us from future mortal sins (n. 1394).

Patience and Perseverance

Practice patience and perseverance! It is imperative to understand that "self-mastery is a long and exacting work. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life. The effort required can be more intense in certain periods..." (CCC, n. 2342). St. Augustine understood this growth process, and reminds us in his Confessions that often "the bridle put upon the throat must be held with moderate looseness and moderate firmness" (10, 31).

The long holidays are about to begin. We have an extended period of rest and recreation in our hands. It can be a great opportunity to grow in many aspects of our lives. Nevertheless, we are always subjected to the temptations that come from idleness... "An idle mind is...". One of the toughest challenges you can face today comes from the wrong use of the internet, especially with pornography. The opponent is powerful, but so are the means at our disposal. Let us face this period of rest as if we were facing a villain: we know its strength, but we have weapons at our disposal. Read this plan and set some goals for your leisure or spiritual life from today. Yes: we can conquer!