

St. Joseph Society



Objective: This month, we will transition from the Boot Camp which ended in May to practicing the Rule of Life in the St. Joseph Society. Last month, we explored the universal call to holiness, the perfection of the Christian life, and the three ways of the interior life so that we can become the man God created us to be. A rule of life helps a person to start to build habits for holiness. The mission of the St. Joseph Society to help men “To Order All Things to Christ” by becoming strong in mind, body, and spirit. This month, we will discuss why a man must become strong in body to free his mind and spirit to pursue higher and more noble goods.

Podcast Schedule

- Episode #1 – Strong in Body
- Episode #2 – What is man?
- Episode #3 – Physical Training as Religious Devotion
- Episode #4 – Fasting & Abstinence

Episode #1 – Strong in Body

I. Introduction

1. Last month, we explored the universal call to holiness, the perfection of the Christian life, and the three ways of the interior life so that we can become the man God created us to be. We also wrapped up our boot camp which has prepared you to live the rule of life. As you will discuss at your monthly meeting, each of the challenges last year prepared you to live our rule of life.
2. St. Joseph Society Mission: To Order All Things to Christ
 - a. The Narrow Path of Discipleship: “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).
 - b. A Commitment to Asceticism:
 - i. John Hardon – Asceticism is defined as “Spiritual effort or exercise in the pursuit of virtue. The purpose is to grow in Christian perfection” (*Catholic Dictionary*).
 - ii. As an act of religious devotion, a man of the St. Joseph Society devotes himself wholeheartedly to living a life of virtue and holiness as an offering to Christ our Lord.
 - iii. The Way of St. Joseph: Pursuing a Life of Virtue in Mind, Body, and Spirit
3. This summer, we will break down the rule of life by discussing what it means to be strong in body (June), mind (July), and spirit (August). This month, we will discuss why a man must become strong in body to free his mind and spirit to pursue higher and more noble goods. The podcasts this month:
 - a. Episode #1 – Strong in Body
 - b. Episode #2 – What is man?
 - c. Episode #3 – Physical Training as Religious Devotion
 - d. Episode #4 – Fasting & Abstinence

II. Strong in Body

1. Rational Justification: Man’s Duties to Himself
 - a. A man’s duties to his soul take precedence over his duties to his body. Man has a general duty to develop his talents, acquire the virtues needed for a good life, and take reasonable care of his health.
 - b. What does reason tell us about taking care of our bodies?
 - i. The Obvious: You need to eat a balanced diet, get plenty of sleep (7-9 hours), take care of your hygiene, and go outside to get some sunshine every day.

- ii. Exercise: According to the Mayo Clinic, a typical man needs 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise or 75 minutes of strenuous aerobic exercise per week.
- iii. Taking reasonable care of the body has lots of physical, psychological, social,

2. Biblical Justification

- a. Romans 12:1 – I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
- b. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 – “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. . . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? . . . do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body.”

3. Theological Justification:

- a. “Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them” (CCC 2288).
- b. Morality rejects the opinions that promote the cult of the body, to sacrifice everything for it's sake, to idolize physical perfection and success at sports (CCC 2289).

III. Application – Strong in Body

1. Start Keeping the Rule

- a. Keep the rule in its entirety. You need to try your best to practice the rule in its entirety. You will only build good habits for holiness if you get a lot of repetitions in, so do your best to hit each of the benchmarks daily, weekly, and monthly.
- b. Keep the rule in a Christian manner.
 - i. First, make sure that you recite the prayers and practice the exercises with the proper intention to know and love God better. Simply going through motions will not work. We need to have the right intentions.
 - ii. Second, you are not taking any vows. This rule of life is not under pain of sin. You want to do your best, but if you fall short at any time, just try to do better the next day. We don't want the perfect to spoil the good. The goal is to make progress month in and month out as we grow in holiness together. If you put forth effort to practice the rule you will become more consistent as you go.

- 2. Monthly Challenge: Strong in Body – A firm commitment to physical training three times per week, fasting throughout the year, and abstinence from meat on Fridays.

Episode #2 – What is man?

I. Introduction

1. Last week, we discussed why a man has a duty to be strong in body. It is clear that both faith and reason testify to this fact, and we should take our bodily health seriously.
2. This week, we are going to define what a man is? We have to properly understand what we are if we are going to be able to know what is good for us. As you will see, this reflection, which we will return to in the fall, is going to lay the groundwork for our understanding of the spiritual life generally, and why I think men need to incorporate physical training, fasting, and abstinence into their spiritual lives specifically.

II. What is man?

1. “The human body shares in the dignity of "the image of God" . . . it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit . . . man may not despise his bodily life. Rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day” (CCC 364).
2. Avoiding Two Reductionistic Extremes
 - a. Platonic/Cartesian Views – I am my soul.
 - b. Naturalistic/Materialistic Views – I am my body.
3. What is the proper view of man?
 - a. Philosophically – Man is a rational animal (his essence).
 - b. Biblically
 - i. The Bible reveals that humans have a material (Rom. 8:23) and spiritual (2 Cor. 11:3) nature.
 - ii. The Bible also reveals that humans will survive death (Mark 12:25).
 - c. Theologically – Man is a soul/body composite (soul animates the body).
 - i. Man is an animal (has a body) and he therefore has passions (appetites or desires) and emotions. However, man is also rational, and he therefore possesses an intellect and a will. Therefore,
 - ii. Why does this matter? When the Church teaches that we are made in the Image of God this does not only apply to the soul, but to the body as well. Therefore, though the soul takes precedence over the body, the soul expresses itself through the body, and the soul and body have reciprocal effects on each other.

III. Why does this matter?

1. Four Aspects of the Human Person

- a. Intellect – The human faculty of understanding, judging, and reasoning
- b. Will – The rational appetite for what one rationally apprehends as good.
- c. Irascible Appetite – A sense appetite for arduous goods.
- d. Concupiscible Appetite – A sense appetite for pleasurable goods.

2. The Four Cardinal Virtues

- a. Prudence perfects the intellect.
- b. Justice perfects the will.
- c. Fortitude perfects the irascible appetite.
- d. Temperance perfects the concupiscible appetite.

3. We must become strong in mind, body, and spirit because every aspect of our lives needs to be conformed to Christ.

III. Application

1. Start Keeping the Rule

- a. Keep the rule in its entirety. You need to try your best to practice the rule in its entirety. You will only build good habits for holiness if you get a lot of repetitions in, so do your best to hit each of the benchmarks daily, weekly, and monthly.
- b. Keep the rule in a Christian manner.
 - i. First, make sure that you recite the prayers and practice the exercises with the proper intention to know and love God better. Simply going through motions will not work. We need to have the right intentions.
 - ii. Second, you are not taking any vows. This rule of life is not under pain of sin. You want to do your best, but if you fall short at any time, just try to do better the next day. We don't want the perfect to spoil the good. The goal is to make progress month in and month out as we grow in holiness together. If you put forth effort to practice the rule you will become more consistent as you go.

2. Monthly Challenge: Strong in Body – A firm commitment to physical training three times per week, fasting throughout the year, and abstinence from meat on Fridays.

Episode #3 – Physical Training as Religious Devotion

I. Introduction

1. Does a Catholic man have to workout to be holy? Yes.
2. Last week, we defined what a man is. I argued that we must properly understand what we are if we are going to be able to know what is good for us. A clear understanding of the nature of man is absolutely essential for laying the groundwork for our understanding of the spiritual life generally, and why I think men need to incorporate physical training, fasting, and abstinence into their spiritual lives specifically.
3. This week, we are going to discuss why I think men should approach physical training as a religious devotion. Our rule of life states that man must make a firm commitment to physical training three times per week.
4. Qualification
 1. I am not claiming that it is absolutely necessary for a man has to lift weights, run, etc. in order to become holy. There is no commandment in scripture that says, “Thou shalt engage in vigorous exercise three times a week. Nor am I claiming that there is a fourth evangelical counsel as if we must practice poverty, chastity, obedience, and burpees.
 2. What I am claiming is that physical training is an excellent option for a spiritual practice that we must do in order to attain eternal life. That spiritual practice is mortification.
 3. St. Benedict – “Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brethren should be occupied at certain times in manual labor, and again at fixed hours in sacred reading” (*The Rule*, Ch. 48).

II. Physical Training as Religious Devotion

1. Biblical Justification
 - a. 1 Timothy 4:7-8 – “Train yourself in godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”
 - b. 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27 – “Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”
2. Theological Justification: Adolphe Tanquerey – *The Spiritual Life*
 - a. What is mortification? – “The struggle against our evil inclinations in order to subject them to the will, and the will of God” (754).
 - b. “Mortification must include the whole man, body and soul; for each of our faculties unless well-disciplined may be the cause of sin” (767).

- c. “Mortification is the enemy of pleasure. True, pleasure of itself is not an evil; rather, it is good when subordinated to its God-given end” (768).
- d. “To jeer at the austerities of former Christian days is a baneful error of *modern times*. As a matter of fact the Saints of all ages, those that have been beatified in these latter days as well as those of old, have severely chastised their bodies” (770).

3. Examples of Mortification

- a. Traditionally – Small iron bracelets clasped to arms, chains worn around the loins, hairshirts, cold showers, rolling around in brambles, taking the discipline, etc.
- b. “Mortification must be practiced with prudence and discretion. It must be properly fitted to the physical and moral strength of each and must be in keeping with the accomplishment of one’s duties of state” (Tanqueray, 769).
- c. Why not physical training?
 - i. First, it is good for a man’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health which will help him fulfill the duties of his state in life better.
 - ii. Second, it is good for a man’s moral life because it helps him to develop temperance and fortitude.
- d. Objections
 - i. I don’t have time.
 - ii. I don’t want to be exposed to gym people or scantily clad women.
 - iii. What about vanity? Egotism?

III. Application

- 1. Start Keeping the Rule
 - a. Keep the rule in its entirety.
 - b. Keep the rule in a Christian manner.
- 2. Monthly Challenge: Strong in Body – A firm commitment to physical training three times per week, fasting throughout the year, and abstinence from meat on Fridays.

Episode #4 – Fasting & Abstinence

I. Introduction

1. Do I really have to practice fasting and abstinence?
2. Last week, we discussed why I think men should approach physical training as a religious devotion. Our rule of life states that man must make a firm commitment to physical training three times per week. We discovered that physical training is not necessary for salvation, but mortification is necessary for salvation. I argued that a consistent workout regimen can help a man mortify his evil inclinations and improve his ability to fulfill his duties in life.
3. This week, we are going to talk about the roles of fasting and abstinence in a man's life. These two practices are an essential and integral part of any rule of life, and we should be devoted to practicing both liberally.

II. Fasting & Abstinence

1. What is abstinence and fasting? – “Abstinence is the moral virtue which inclines man to the moderate use of food as dictated by right reason (or by faith) for his own moral good” (Dominic Prummer, *Handbook of Moral Theology*, 211).
2. Fasting
 - a. Fasting can be complete – Total abstinence from all food and drink, such as before taking Holy Communion.
 - b. Fasting can be natural – A partial abstinence from food and drink for some natural purpose.
 - c. Fasting can be ecclesial – Fasting that is commanded by the laws of the Church.
3. Abstinence – Refraining from eating meat.
4. Why should I practice fasting and abstinence? – “Many a sin takes its rise directly or indirectly in the craving for pleasure, in excess in eating and drinking, and nothing is so effective in making atonement as mortification in eating, reaching as it does the very root of evil by mortifying the craving for sensual pleasure. This is why the Saints have made a practice of fasting even outside seasons appointed by the Church” (Tanqueray, 749).
5. The Bare Minimum – The Precepts of the Church
 - a. CCC 2043 – “The fourth precept (“You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church”) ensures the times of asceticism and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart.”
 - b. USCCB – Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. In addition, Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence.

- i. For members of the Latin Catholic Church, the norms on fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59.
 - ii. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal, as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal.
 - iii. The norms concerning abstinence from meat are binding upon members of the Latin Catholic Church from age 14 onwards.
 - iv. Canon No. 919 – One who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain from any food or drink, with the exception only of water and medicine, for at least the period of one hour before Holy Communion.
6. Be Generous – “Friday should be in each week something of what Lent is in the entire year . . . freely making of every Friday a day of self-denial and mortification in prayerful remembrance of the passion of Jesus Christ . . . even though we hereby terminate the traditional law of abstinence binding under pain of sin, as the sole prescribed means of observing Friday, we give first place to abstinence from flesh meat” (*Pastoral Statement on Penance and Abstinence*, 23-24).

III. Application

1. Start Keeping the Rule
 - a. Keep the rule in its entirety.
 - b. Keep the rule in a Christian manner.
2. Monthly Challenge: Strong in Body – A firm commitment to physical training three times per week, fasting throughout the year, and abstinence from meat on Fridays.
 - a. Abstinence as Mortification – Abstain from various things to help develop a detached relationship to legitimate pleasures.
 - b. Fasting Throughout the Year
 - i. Wednesdays and Fridays are traditional days of fasting. Ember days and vigils of great feasts are also good opportunities to fast.
 - ii. Intermittent Fasting is a good discipline. You could fast for 12, 14, or 16 hours a day for set periods of time.
 - iii. Complete fast before Holy Communion could be observed. Traditionally, you would eat anything from midnight the night before you were going to take Holy Communion. This would be a good practice to adopt.