



Retreat given by Jesus to St Faustina on:

The 25 Secrets of Spiritual Warfare

In Cracow, Poland on June 2, 1938 the Lord Jesus himself directed a young Polish Sister of Mercy on a three-day retreat. Faustina Kowalska painstakingly recorded Christ's instruction in her diary that is a mystical manual on prayer and divine mercy. This is a unique retreat that Christ gave on the subject of spiritual warfare. (Paragraph 1760, Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska)

Here are the secret whispers of Jesus to his little bride Faustina on how to protect herself from the attacks of the devil. These instructions became Faustina's weapon in fighting the good fight.

Jesus began, "My daughter, I want to teach you about spiritual warfare."

(The Lord's words are in bold; Father James Nadeau's comments follow.)

Secret #1: Never trust in yourself but abandon yourself totally to My will.

In this secret, Jesus tells us that *trust* is a spiritual weapon. Trust is part of the shield of faith that St. Paul mentions in his letter to the Ephesians where he writes: "Put on the whole armor of God...Stand therefore having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one." The faithful must arm themselves with Christ, trusting in God's inconceivable might to defend themselves. Faith, the chief of virtues, assures us of God's providence and this acts as a shield against temptation. Christ, as our helmet, protects our inward affections. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, by which we put the devil to flight. For abandonment to God's will is an act of trust; faith in action dispels evil spirits. Lord God, all that we are and all that we have comes from you. May we never take for granted your daily, gracious, faithful care.

Secret #2: In desolation, darkness and various doubts, have recourse to Me and to your spiritual director. He will always answer you in My name.

This secret counsels us in times of spiritual warfare, immediately pray to Jesus. Invoke his Holy name that is feared in the Netherworld. Jesus is our celestial tutor. No matter what befalls us, we must cast ourselves into Jesus' arms. Know that the least trifle of a distraction cannot withdraw your soul from God, since nothing withdraws us from God but sin. If God requires us to walk on the waves of adversity, fear not, doubt not; God will be with you. Have good courage and you shall be delivered. Remember that if God permits you to fall, like St. Paul whom he cast to the earth, it will be to raise you up in glory. "All things work together for good to those who love God." Blessed be the Holy name of God.

Secret #3: Do not bargain with any temptation; lock yourself immediately in My heart.

This secret reminds us that in the Garden of Eden, Eve bargained with the Devil and lost. We have recourse to the refuge of the Sacred Heart. In running to Christ, we turn our backs on the demonic. Recall also that when the devil came to tempt both Eve in the garden and our Lord in the wilderness, he took advantage of their being alone. That is one of his strategies, so we need to stick together to avoid his attacks. Be not troubled, however great the temptation that assail you. Let the enemy rage at the door; we are sure he cannot enter but by the door of our consent. Let us keep the door closed and see that it is properly fastened, then there is nothing to fear. Finally, be assured that all the temptations of Hell cannot sully a soul which is displeased with them; let them do their worst then. The Apostle St. Paul suffered terrible ones, and God, out of love for him, would not remove them. Come, come, have courage; let your heart belong to Jesus. "Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge."

Secret #4: At the first opportunity, reveal the temptation to your confessor.

In this secret, Jesus tells us that a good confession, a good confession and a good penitent are a recipe for victory over temptation and demonic aggression – without fail. Go with confidence in the spirit of humility to make your confession. Do not be troubled by any sort of anxiety. Contrition and confession are in themselves so lovely and sweet-savored that they wipe out the stain and disperse the stench of sin. If we are truly humble, we will grieve bitterly over our sins because they offend God. But we will find a welcome sweetness in accusing ourselves, because in doing so we honor Him. And we will find relief in fully revealing to the physician all the details of our condition. Tell your confessor everything simply and straightforwardly, so you can thoroughly relieve your conscience. Then listen to the warnings and counsels of God's minister, saying in your heart, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening."

Secret #5: Put your self-love in the last place, so that it does not taint your deeds.

This secret counsels us that self-love is natural but it should be ordered, free of pride. Love of ourselves, esteem of ourselves, are roots which cannot be easily plucked out of the human heart; but we can prevent their bearing any fruits, which are sins. As for their buddings, we cannot prevent them altogether, so long as we are in this life, though we can moderate their dimensions by the practice of contrary virtues, especially by love of God and humility. Satan tempts us to disordered self-love to lead us into his pool of pride. Humility defeats the devil, which is perfect pride. If we need any motivations to be humble, we need only consider Jesus, who humbled himself to save us.

Secret #6: Bear with yourself with great patience.

This secret reminds us that patience is a secret weapon which helps us keep our peace of soul even in the great storms of life. Bearing with oneself is part of humility and trust. The devil tempts us to impatience, to turn against ourselves so we become angry. See yourself from God's view. He is infinitely patient. For the virtue of patience is obvious to everyone. From this one virtue, fruitfulness and generosity flow, spreading like overflowing streams through many paths of glory. It is patience that both commends us to God and keeps us with God. It is patience that firmly fortifies the foundation of our faith. This virtue lifts our hope to new heights. And it makes us persevere as children of God as we imitate our Father's patience. In short, patience is a virtue that allows us to perfect every other virtue. It fortifies our faith, elevates our hope and helps us persevere in love.

Secret #7: Do not neglect interior mortifications.

In this secret, Jesus reminds us that Scripture teaches that some demons can only be evicted by prayer and fasting. Interior mortifications are weapons of warfare. They can be small sacrifices offered with great love. The power of sacrificial love evicts the enemy. Avoid the spirit of evil, who is all the time suggesting reasons why interior mortifications and penance should not be done. If the Devil cannot prevent a man from doing penance by appealing to his laziness and love of luxury, he does his best to prevent him by appealing to false fear and a misconceived humility. Do not avoid prayer and fasting. Jesus himself reminds that every branch will be pruned so as to bear more fruit. So be habitually alert to serve God by prayer and interior mortifications. Do not neglect these spiritual weapons of warfare. Rather, have the same attitude as our Lady when she said, "Be it done to me according to thy word."

Secret #8: Always justify to yourself the opinions of your superiors and of your confessor.

In this secret, Christ is speaking to St. Faustina who lives in a convent. But we all have people in authority over us. The devil aims to divide and conquer so humble obedience to authentic authority is a spiritual weapon. In fact, no virtue could ever be of benefit without a humble obedience to God. Attempts to be virtuous that are joined to disobedience to the will of God, no matter how good they may appear, will actually work for our condemnation. Recall when St. Peter at first refused to have Jesus wash his feet. He was elevating his own notions of what was proper over our Lord's command. To avoid this error, we must recognize that virtue is impossible without obedience to God. For as Scripture says: "Better is obedience than sacrifice." (1 Samuel 15:22)

Secret #9: Shun murmurs like a plague.

In this secret, we are reminded that the tongue is a powerful vessel that can do great harm. Murmuring, gossiping is never of God. The devil is a liar who stirs up false accusations and gossip that can kill a person's reputation. Shun murmurs! Slander, detraction and other forms of speaking evil about others unjustly are like a triple murder by words. They damage not just the person spoken about, but also the one speaking and the one listening. Speaking ill of others unjustly is a pest of society. Never speak evil of anyone, either directly or indirectly. Beware of ever unjustly imputing crimes and sins to your neighbor (which is slander); of needlessly disclosing true faults (which is detraction); of exaggerating; of attributing wrong motives to good actions; of maliciously concealing the good or minimizing it in conversation. In all these ways we grievously offend God. But the worst is false accusations, or denying the truth in a way that injures your neighbor.

Secret #10: Let all act as they like; you are to act as I want you to.

In this secret, Jesus counsels us to mind one's own business, for this is the key in spiritual warfare. The devil is a busybody attempting to drag everyone down. Please God and let the opinions of others go by the wayside. In fact, shun those who get pleasure out of hearing and reporting that which is dishonest and shameful. The spreading of gossip sows almost all discord and disunity. The devil delights in disunity and discord. A great many people gossip and slander because of pride. They think that by depreciating others they will increase their own worth. They want to make the most of their own alleged good qualities. Everything they say and do will be good, and everything that others say and do will be wrong. Lord God, teach us to act as you want. And we beg you teach us to guard the reputation of others as we would our own.

Secret #11: Observe the rule as faithfully as you can.

In this secret, Jesus is referring to the rule of a religious order. Most of us have made some vow before God and the church - for example, marriage vows or baptismal vows, and we should be faithful to our promises. Satan tempts to infidelity, lawlessness and disobedience. Fidelity is a weapon of victory. God has given us the strength of free will, fortified in the blood of his Son. Neither the devil nor any other creature can control this free will, because it is ours given to us by God. By our own choice then, we can hold it or let go of it as we please. It is a spiritual weapon; and if we place it in the hands of the Devil, it right away becomes a knife that he'll use to stab and kill you. On the other hand, if we remain faithful and if we do not place this knife that is your will into the hands of the devil, you will never be injured by the guilt of sin in any temptation. Lord Jesus, you overcame temptations and vanquished the devil. Because of your victory, we too can conquer, in the power of your Holy Spirit.

Secret #12: If someone causes you trouble, think of what good you can do for the person who caused you to suffer.

In this secret, Jesus reminds us that being a vessel of divine mercy is a weapon for good and for defeating evil. The devil is about hatred, rage, revenge and unforgiveness. Others have hurt us all at some time. What good can we do in return? Returning a blessing breaks curses. We must not allow charity to suffer as a result of what others have done to us. Penance is, in any case, to be judged more by what it gains than by what it renounces. If Christ is the way, we Christians are on the way. We are followers. We are followers, moreover, in cross-bearing. We come behind Him. Identification with Christ's passion is an idea that the mind can grasp. Thus, in the wounds others place upon us, we can find our trust for eternal life. Our wounds can become our merits. The identification is with Christ and his cross. May we always take advantage of the crosses sent to us and from them may we bring: light into darkness and ultimately life into death.

Secret #13: Do not pour out your feelings.

In this secret, Jesus reminds us that a talkative soul will more easily be attacked by the devil. Pour out your feelings to the Lord only. Remember, the good and evil spirits hear what you say aloud. Feelings are fleeting. Truth is the compass. Interior recollection is a spiritual armor. Guarding the heart requires guarding the mouth. Even a single word spoken in anger can lead to much harm. Bind up our words so they won't run riot and grow undisciplined and gather up sins for themselves in too much talking. Let our words be confined instead and held back within their own banks. For an overflowing river quickly gathers mud. Finally, let there be a door to our mouth, so that it can be shut when the need arises. Let that door be carefully barred, so that no one can arouse your voice to anger. Otherwise, we might fall into sin. Word of God, teach me to weigh my words carefully, so that they won't injure, but rather will heal.

Secret #14: Be silent when you are rebuked.

In this secret, Jesus reminds us that most of us have been rebuked at some time. We have no control over that but we can control our response. The need to be right all the time can lead into demonic traps. The devil can use self-righteousness to trip us up also. Let it go. Silence is a protection. What need is there for one to hurry to undergo the danger of condemnation by speaking, when one can be more safe by keeping silent. How many people have fallen into sin by speaking, but scarcely one by keeping silent! A wise person once gave this advice to the human race: "If you speak, say little and speak low; do not shout." Truly, this is a most useful saying. For the one who is wise knows how to keep silent. Lord God, teach us the value of silence - not just so we can avoid sin in speaking, but also so we can allow you to search our hearts.

Secret #15: Do not ask everyone's opinion, but only the opinions of your confessor; be as frank and simple as a child with him.

In this secret, Jesus tells us that simplicity of life can drive out demons. Honesty is a weapon to defeat Satan, the liar. When we lie, we put a foot in his camp and he will try to seduce us all the more. We must never let our guard down against the devil. He relentlessly seeks out our weaknesses and attacks where we are most vulnerable. We must strive with all our strength to repel the enemy of our souls, with full attention and vigilance, as he rages and aims his darts against every part of us that can be assaulted and wounded. Make no doubt about it, he circles around each of us. Like an army coming against those besieged in a city, he examines the city walls, looking for places that are less firm, less trustworthy. When the weaknesses are found, the siege forces break through them and penetrate to the inside. He is always restless and always hostile, crafty in peace and fierce in persecution. For these reasons, our mind must stand arrayed and armed against all the devil's deceiving snares and open threats. St. Michael, the archangel, defend us in battle.

Secret #16: Do not become discouraged by ingratitude.

In this secret, Jesus reminds us that no one likes to be taken for granted. But when we are met with ingratitude or insensitivity, the spirit of discouragement can weigh us down. Resist all discouragement, for it is never of God. It is one of the devil's most effective temptations. Gratitude in all things wins the day. We must give thanks to God continually. For it is horribly wrong for us to speak not even a word each day acknowledging His favor, in light of all the bounty we enjoy from Him. In fact, such an acknowledgement is actually all to our benefit, since God certainly needs nothing from us. Yet, we stand in need of all things from Him. So, thanksgiving itself adds nothing to him, but it draws us nearer to Him. Lord God, all that I am and all that I have comes from You. May I never take for granted your daily, gracious, faithful care.

Secret #17: Do not examine with curiosity the roads down which I lead you.

This secret counsels us that the need to know, and curiosity about the future, is a temptation that has led too many people into the back rooms of psychics and witches. Choose to walk in faith. Decide to trust in God who leads you on the path to heaven. Resist the spirit of curiosity always. What a great deal of time is lost in this day by curiosity about things which in no way concern us: vain curiosity, love of scandal, love of idle tales, curious prying into the private history of people, curiosity about trials and offenses, even curiosity about someone's sin. What strange and diseased curiosity many have. Worse still, it is shocking to say, but there is so much evil curiosity to know about deeds of darkness, of which the apostle Paul says that he is shameful to speak. No, vain curiosity can lead us where we should not go: into matters that do not concern us and even into sinful behavior. Lord God, give us an abiding curiosity about whatever concerns You. Teach us to be always learning more about *Your* ways, uninterested in anything that would distract us from You or lead us into sin.

Secret #18: When boredom and discouragement beat against your heart, run away from yourself and hide in My heart.

In this secret, Jesus delivers the same message a second time. Now, He refers to boredom. Earlier in the diary, he told St. Faustina that the devil most tempts idle souls. Beware of boredom, a spirit of lethargy, the noonday devil. Idle souls are easy prey for demons. Be about the business of God. The devil works overtime making false promises and setting traps to tempt us. He makes a show of false things, so that he can steal away the true things. For the enemy presents to the eyes seductive images and easy pleasures, so he can destroy chastity through the sense of sight. He tempts the ears with seductive music, so that by hearing these sweet sounds, the soul relaxes its guard and loses strength. He provokes the tongue by rebukes. He instigates the hand to do evil. So, we must close our ears to his words, turn away, and do the opposite of what he says. Lord God, teach us to turn a deaf ear to the enemy by listening instead to Your voice.

Secret #19: Do not fear struggle; courage itself often intimidates temptation, and they dare not attack us.

In this secret, we are reminded that fear is the second most common tactic of the devil (pride is the first). Courage intimidates the devil – he will flee in the face of persevering courage that stands on Jesus, the rock. All people struggle; God is our provision. Let us prepare our souls for fighting temptations. The spiritual life is a battle; and the enemy of our souls assaults us through temptations. But our Lord is greater than our adversary. If we remain alert to the devil's strategy, we can be victorious. Now, we must understand that the more zealous we are for our salvation, the more determined will be the assaults of our opponents – the devil and his demons. However, know that the one who is within us is stronger than the one who is against us. Through Him we are powerful, and on His strength we rely. For Jesus conquered the Adversary. He fought then so that we too, following after Him, might fight. He conquered so that we too might conquer. Lord Jesus, you showed us how to stand firm against the enemy of our soul. Give us the courage when we are tempted, so that we can be victorious over temptations, as you were.

Secret #20: Always fight with deep conviction that I am with you.

In this secret, Jesus instructs a Sister in a convent to “fight” with conviction. She can do so because Christ accompanies her. Christians are called to fight with conviction against all demonic tactics. The devil tries to terrorize souls, demonic terrorism – resist! Invoke the Holy Spirit throughout the day. In the Holy Spirit we have from God a mighty ally and a protector; a great teacher of the faith, a mighty champion on our behalf. We must not be afraid of demons, nor of the devil himself. For more powerful than those is the One who fights for us. But we must open our doors to Him, for He goes about seeking those who are worthy and searching for those on whom He may bestow His gifts. Come, Holy Spirit, our champion, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in us the fire of your love.

Secret #21: Do not be guided by feeling, because it is not always under your control; but all merit lies in the will.

In this secret, we are reminded that all merit lies in the will because love is an act of the will. We are completely free in Christ. We must make a choice, a decision for good or evil. What camp do we live in? For God created man a rational being, conferring on him the dignity of a person who can initiate and control his own actions. God willed that man should be “left in the hand of his own counsel” so that he might, on his own accord, seek his Creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to Him. By free will, one shapes one’s own life. Our free will is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God. In fact, the more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. Lord God, in your goodness take away from us all that is harmful, so that, made ready both in mind and body, we may freely accomplish Your will.

Secret #22: Always depend upon your superiors, even in the smallest things.

In this secret, Jesus is instructing a Religious. But, we all have the Lord as our superior. Dependence upon God is a weapon of spiritual warfare because we cannot win on our own. Christ came to defeat death and evil. So, let us listen to the Lord our superior and resist even the small temptations. Victories over great temptations are critical to our spiritual progress. However, great temptations are rare. So, victories over lesser temptations are just as important, because there are so many to be conquered. The number of little temptations is so much more considerable in our lives that a victory over them is just as important as a victory over the ones that are greater, but more rare. For example, it is easy to abstain from murder. But it is difficult to avoid the angry outbursts that are often aroused within us. It is easy to avoid adultery. But it is not so easy to be wholly and constantly pure in words, looks, thoughts and deeds. Lord God, lesser temptations surround us daily, and we often find them more difficult to resist. Give us the grace in the midst of these temptations to be wise to recognize them and firm to overcome them.

Secret #23: I will not delude you with prospects of peace and consolations; on the contrary prepare for great battles.

In this secret we are reminded that St. Faustina would suffer much physically and spiritually. She was prepared for great battles by the grace of God who upheld her. Christ clearly instructs us in Scripture to be prepared for great battles, to put on God's armor and resist the devil. Be vigilant and discerning always. Satan fights the strong and the proud, but he has no power against the children of the light. They defeat him by their acts of humility. But be brave. Our adversary is skillful. He who contends against us is crafty. Those who are spiritual see him when he attacks and his array has no power upon their bodies. All children of light are without fear of him, because the darkness flies from before the light. For God leads us by the hand, training us for our salvation. Lord God, enlighten us when we are in the dark, deliver us from our sins and protect and defend us at all times.

Secret #24: Know that you are on a great stage where all heaven and earth are watching you.

This secret reminds us that we are all on a great stage where heaven and earth are watching. What message is our life giving? What radiates from us – shades of light, darkness, or gray? The way we live attracts more light or more darkness. If the devil does not succeed in pulling us into darkness, he tries to keep us in the category of the lukewarm, which is not pleasing to God. For a lukewarm soul is not yet quite dead in the eyes of God because the faith, the hope and the charity that are its spiritual life are not altogether extinct. But it's a faith without zeal, a hope without resolution, a charity without passion. The lukewarm soul is like a turtle. It moves only by dragging itself along the ground. You can see it getting from place to place with great difficulty. Lord God, your Word tells us that if a soul remains lukewarm for a lifetime, you will spit it out of your mouth (Rev 3:16). Save us from that fate! Breathe spark within us to make it a blazing fire of love for you!

Secret #25: Fight like a knight, so I can reward you. Do not be unduly fearful, because you are not alone.

In this secret we hear the Lord's words to St. Faustina. These words should become our mantra: Fight like a knight! A knight for Christ knows well the cause that he fights for, the nobility of his mission, the king whom he serves, and the blessed assuredness of the victory. He fights to the end, even at the cost of his life. If a young, uneducated, simple Polish nun, united to Christ, can fight like a knight, every Christian can do the same. Now consider this fact: God Almighty, the Maker and Lord of heaven and earth and all that is in them, has adopted, as his beloved children and heirs to his kingdom. Shouldn't we be inflamed and ravished with his divine love? Shouldn't we hurry to begin our journey to Him in heaven? Let us respond to the offer of the Creator of the Universe. This adoption is within our reach, right where we are, whenever we wish. Lord, King of the Universe, You have called us to serve you as our Creator and Lord. We marvel at your offer to make us not just your servant but your child and a coheir with Christ!