



The Devil's Lantern: The Disturbing Dream of Saint John Bosco That Seems to Reflect the Power of Mobile Phones Today | 1

In 1865, Saint John Bosco recounted a dream in which a mysterious lantern managed to distract young people from receiving Holy Communion. More than a century and a half later, that image invites us to reflect deeply on screens, distractions, the freedom of the soul, and the battle for inner silence.

Imagine, for a moment, a church filled with young people. The altar is prepared, the priest celebrates the sacred mysteries, and Christ, truly present in the Eucharist, awaits the faithful. Yet something strange happens: many of those young people, although physically present in the church, have their attention captivated by something else. A disturbing character shows them fascinating images, pleasant memories, amusements, pleasures, and promises. The young people watch, become absorbed, and gradually forget what they came to seek.

We are not describing a scene from our own time, with illuminated phones in the hands of those attending Mass. We are speaking of a dream attributed to Saint John Bosco, the great nineteenth-century Italian priest and educator, founder of the Salesian family and apostle of the young.

In that dream, the instrument of distraction was not a smartphone, a tablet, or a screen connected to the internet. It was a **magic lantern**, a device capable of projecting images and captivating the attention of those who watched them.

The resemblance to our world is striking. Today, millions of people carry a device in their pockets capable of showing them, at any moment and in any place, news, conversations, videos, games, photographs, pleasures, and a practically endless succession of new things. A simple movement of the finger is enough to abandon what we were doing and enter another world.

Can we claim that Saint John Bosco prophesied the arrival of mobile phones? It would be imprudent to assert that. But we can ask ourselves whether the spiritual warning conveyed by his dream remains extraordinarily relevant: **What happens when the things that attract our eyes end up stealing our hearts, our time, our capacity for recollection, and even our desire to draw near to God?**

This is the question that deserves our attention. The point is not to demonize technology indiscriminately or idealize a past in which distractions, temptations, and sins also existed. It is to understand a permanent spiritual truth: human beings can lose sight of their ultimate end when they allow secondary things to occupy the place of what is essential.

And few images express this reality as powerfully as the lantern in Don Bosco's dream.



1. Saint John Bosco: A Priest Who Understood the Hearts of Young People

To understand the meaning of the dream, we must first know the man who recounted it.

Saint John Bosco was born on August 16, 1815, in Castelnuovo d'Asti, in the Italian region of Piedmont. He lost his father when he was very young and grew up in a humble family environment marked by economic difficulties, hard work, and the deep faith of his mother, Margaret Occhiena.

From his youth, he felt a particular concern for the Christian education of boys, especially those living in difficult circumstances. During an era of great social transformations, many young people arrived in cities looking for work and ended up exposed to poverty, exploitation, crime, and the loss of their family and religious ties.

Don Bosco understood that it was not enough to reprimand young people when they made mistakes. He had to approach them, earn their trust, teach them Christian truth, and offer them an environment in which they could grow both humanly and spiritually.

His educational method, known as the Preventive System, was based especially on reason, religion, and loving-kindness. This did not mean abandoning discipline, but rather helping young people understand the good, love it, and choose it freely.

At the heart of his work were prayer, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, frequent confession, the Eucharist, and concern for the eternal salvation of souls.

Don Bosco did not regard religion as an ornament that could be added to education whenever there was time. He understood it as the foundation that made it possible to direct freedom, form the conscience, and give existence a profound meaning.

For this reason, his warnings about distractions should not be interpreted as the complaints of an adult annoyed because young people enjoy themselves. His concern was far more serious: he feared that what captivated the boys might ultimately lead them away from the means of grace that could help them live in friendship with God.

In his accounts of dreams, images of spiritual combat, scenes of struggle, and warnings addressed to the educational community of the Oratory of Valdocco in Turin frequently appear.



Nevertheless, an important distinction must be maintained. Don Bosco's dreams form part of a well-known spiritual tradition, but each account must be studied with attention to its historical transmission, context, and content. Not every dream should be considered a supernatural prophecy in the strict sense, nor does interpreting them authorize us to claim that every detail announces a specific future event.

The greatness of his teaching does not depend on our ability to identify every image with a later invention. Its pastoral value also lies in its capacity to illuminate the human struggles of every age.

And this is precisely where our reflection on the lantern begins.

2. The Dream of the Magic Lantern: A Disturbing Scene in the Church

The account known as *The Magic Lantern* is transmitted in collections of Don Bosco's dreams. The version commonly circulated under this title is dated May 1, 1865, and is recorded in volume VIII, pages 115–116, of the *Biographical Memoirs*.

The scene is simple, yet charged with meaning.

Don Bosco finds himself in a church filled with young people. He observes that only a few approach the altar rail to receive Holy Communion. Near the railing of the high altar appears a threatening figure, described in the account as having a demonic appearance.

The figure carries a magic lantern in his hand and uses it to show different images to the boys.

To some, he presents lively recreations and games that they find particularly attractive. To others, he shows lost matches or future victories. Some see their hometown, its fields, their walks, and familiar places. Others see their studies, their books, and the everyday concerns that occupy their lives.

There are also fruits, sweets, wine, family members, friends, sinful scenes, and money that had not been given away.

Each young person finds something capable of capturing his attention. The images are not identical for everyone, because people do not have the same inclinations, desires, or weaknesses.



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Some are attracted by amusement. Others by nostalgia. Some by success. Others by material pleasures or by things that feed their disordered passions.

The result, however, is the same: the boys become captivated by what they see and forget to approach the Holy Table.

The figure does not need to physically expel them from the church. He does not need to knock down the altar or prevent Mass from being celebrated. He only needs to keep their eyes and thoughts occupied.

This is the power of the image.

The young people remain there, but their attention has been conquered. They are close to holy things, yet they occupy themselves with others. The opportunity to approach Christ remains open, although they allow themselves to be absorbed by what the lantern offers them.

The teaching attributed to Don Bosco is unmistakable: the devil seeks to distract young people in order to turn them away from the holy sacraments. The proposed response is to break free from that fascination, raise one's eyes toward the Cross, and remember the importance of remaining close to Jesus.

We must not overlook one detail: **the lantern does not force the young people to look. It seduces them.**

Distraction often begins in this way. It rarely presents itself as an explicit renunciation of God. It frequently arrives disguised as something attractive, innocent, urgent, or apparently necessary.

"Just a moment."

"I'll take a quick look at something."

"I'll pray afterward."

"When this video finishes, I'll return to what I was doing."

"I don't have time for prayer now, but I'll make it up later."

Again and again, secondary things displace what is essential. And by the time we realize



what has happened, time has passed.

The lantern in the dream is powerful precisely because it does not need to appear dangerous. Its attractiveness is enough.

3. Did Saint John Bosco Prophecy the Arrival of Mobile Phones?

This is the question that makes the dream an issue of extraordinary relevance today.

When Saint John Bosco recounted that scene in 1865, mobile phones were nowhere near becoming a reality. The technology of his time was radically different from ours. The magic lantern, however, already made it possible to project images and awaken the curiosity of those watching them.

Today, we have devices that perform that function on a scale unimaginable to a man of the nineteenth century. A phone can display videos, photographs, conversations, news, games, films, live broadcasts, and personalized content for each user.

In a certain sense, we carry a small window into an entire universe in our pockets.

For this reason, many people who learn about Don Bosco's dream immediately recognize a resemblance between that lantern and smartphones. The comparison is particularly suggestive because it is not limited to the outward appearance of the two instruments: it also reaches the way they can influence our attention.

But we must formulate the question rigorously.

We do not have sufficient grounds to claim that Don Bosco identified the lantern with future mobile phones. The interpretation linking the two is a contemporary application of the dream's teaching, not a historically demonstrated identification.

This distinction does not diminish its interest. On the contrary, it allows us to discover a deeper lesson.

If Don Bosco's warning were limited to predicting a particular device, its relevance would depend on that device appearing. If, however, we understand the lantern as a symbol of everything that captivates our attention and turns us away from the good we ought to accomplish, its message can illuminate many different situations.



The problem is not merely the existence of a screen. The problem arises when fascination with what we see ends up governing what we do, what we desire, and what we consider important.

The Modern Lantern Fits in the Palm of Our Hand

Let us consider a familiar scene.

A person prepares to pray the Holy Rosary. He kneels, begins the opening prayers, and suddenly remembers that he has an unanswered message. He picks up his phone to reply quickly.

While replying, he sees a notification. The notification leads him to a post. The post contains a video. The video reminds him of something else he wants to look up. Then another news item appears, followed by a comment that arouses his curiosity.

When he looks at the clock again, twenty minutes have passed.

Perhaps he has seen nothing wrong. Perhaps he has answered legitimate messages, read useful information, and viewed perfectly innocent content. Nevertheless, the prayer he intended to offer has been displaced.

The lantern did not need to show him something evil. It only needed to show him something more attractive at that moment than remaining recollected before God.

This is one of the paradoxes of our time: we can have more means of communication and yet experience greater difficulty in being truly present to those standing before us. We can access entire libraries from a phone and spend hours consuming content that barely enriches our minds. We can use the internet to understand the faith better and end up consuming an endless succession of religious controversies.

We can also use these same tools to pray, read Sacred Scripture, listen to a sermon, learn the Catechism, or participate in an evangelization initiative.

Technology, therefore, does not by itself determine the moral outcome. What matters is the object of its use, the intention, the circumstances, and the effects it produces in our lives.

The same phone that distracts us during prayer may contain the text of the Missal, a Bible, the Divine Office, an application for praying the Rosary, or a lecture on doctrinal formation.



The decisive question is not merely what device we hold in our hands, but **who governs our attention and toward what end we are directing it.**

What Is Truly Disturbing: The Personalization of Temptation

In the dream, the lantern does not show exactly the same things to everyone. Each person sees what attracts him most.

This detail allows us to draw a particularly suggestive comparison with today's digital platforms.

Many internet services use recommendation systems that select content based on each user's interactions. What one person sees on a screen may differ considerably from what appears on another person's screen.

Digital systems can learn which posts generate the most interest, which videos keep a user watching for longer, or which subjects encourage someone to continue exploring.

We should not attribute demonic intentions to algorithms or claim that every platform necessarily pursues a morally bad objective. Their functioning depends on how they have been designed and the interests guiding them.

Nevertheless, we can recognize a practical similarity: users receive content capable of connecting with their tastes, concerns, desires, and weaknesses.

Someone passionate about sports may continually receive results, debates, and sporting controversies. Someone attracted to shopping may be shown offers and new products. Someone seeking entertainment may find a chain of videos that seems never to end.

And someone who allows himself to be carried away by curiosity, vanity, anger, or impurity may encounter stimuli that feed precisely those inclinations.

The lantern in the dream thus becomes a useful image for examining a personal question: Which contents capture my attention because they serve my best interests, and which do so because they feed my weaknesses?

It is not enough to say that we like something. We must ask whether that preference helps us grow in virtue, knowledge, charity, and self-mastery.



4. The Dream and Holy Communion: The Heart of the Warning

There is one detail we must not lose sight of: the scene in Don Bosco's dream takes place in a church, and the distraction prevents many young people from approaching Holy Communion.

This detail is fundamental to interpreting the warning from the standpoint of traditional Catholic theology.

Don Bosco does not simply present a group of boys wasting time. The scene shows how an attraction of secondary importance can displace something of incomparably greater spiritual importance.

For the Catholic faith, the Eucharist is not an empty symbol or merely a sentimental representation of the Last Supper. It is the sacrament in which Christ is truly, really, and substantially present under the appearances of bread and wine.

The Council of Trent solemnly taught this Real Presence of Jesus Christ. Catholic doctrine holds that, through consecration, the entire substance of bread is converted into the Body of Christ and the entire substance of wine into His Blood, while the sacramental appearances remain.

For this reason, the Eucharist occupies a central place in the life of the Church.

In it, Christ's sacrifice is made sacramentally present, the unity of His Mystical Body is signified and brought about, and the glory of the heavenly banquet is anticipated. Holy Communion nourishes the Christian's supernatural life and strengthens his union with Our Lord.

Saint Paul writes:

"The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?"

— 1 Corinthians 10:16.



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The question raised by the dream is therefore profoundly serious: what happens when we allow things of lesser importance to turn us away from the means God offers us for our sanctification?

Naturally, not every distraction constitutes a mortal sin, nor is every failure to receive Communion caused by temptation. There are legitimate reasons for not receiving Communion: a person may need to prepare better, may be in a situation requiring moral discernment, or may not be properly disposed to receive the sacrament worthily.

We must also remember that no one is obliged to receive Communion at every Mass. Conscious, reverent, and fruitful participation in the liturgy is not measured exclusively by whether someone physically approaches the altar.

The dream's teaching concerns another reality: the danger of abandoning or neglecting sacramental life because of a disordered fascination with passing things.

When a person systematically neglects prayer, confession, Christian formation, and participation in the life of the Church because he always finds something more entertaining, he may gradually weaken his relationship with God.

This does not necessarily happen from one day to the next. Spiritual deterioration often begins with small omissions that are repeated until they become habits.

Today I cannot pray because I am tired.

Tomorrow I will not read the Gospel because I have too many things to check.

The day after, I will miss a devotional practice because I prefer to continue an activity that entertains me.

Eventually, prayer begins to seem like a burdensome obligation, while distractions present themselves as a necessity.

The lantern remains illuminated, and the soul becomes accustomed to looking elsewhere.

What, Then, Does It Mean to Break the Lantern?

It does not mean destroying our phones, rejecting all technological advances, or living disconnected from the world.



It means recovering control of our attention and ordering our habits according to the truth of the faith.

If the phone prevents us from praying, we need to establish limits. If it repeatedly leads us to sinful content, we must cut off that access. If it causes us to neglect our family responsibilities, work, or religious duties, we must change the way we use it.

And if the problem lies in an interior inclination—vanity, disordered curiosity, envy, lust, or the constant search for approval—we will not solve it merely by changing devices. We must work on the heart.

The image in Don Bosco's dream invites us to raise our eyes toward the Cross. Not to despise everything created, but to remember that no created thing should occupy God's place.

5. The Theology of Distraction: When Secondary Things Take the Place of What Is Essential

To explore this subject more deeply, it is useful to distinguish three realities that we often confuse: involuntary distraction, habitual distraction, and deliberately sought distraction.

This distinction matters because Catholic moral theology does not judge all acts in the same way. Personal responsibility depends, among other factors, on knowledge, consent, the object of the act, and its circumstances.

Involuntary Distraction

The human mind does not maintain perfect concentration throughout the day. While we pray, memories, worries, images, or thoughts may arise that we have not deliberately sought.

A person may be before the Blessed Sacrament and suddenly remember a family problem. Someone may begin the Rosary and discover that his thoughts have wandered toward an unfinished task.

This does not automatically mean that he is sinning.

In the Catholic spiritual tradition, a distinction is made between experiencing a distraction and voluntarily consenting to it. The fact that a thought appears does not mean that we have chosen it, approved it, or deliberately entertained it.



For this reason, we should not obsessively scrutinize our minds or conclude that a prayer has no value because we have not maintained absolute concentration.

The Lord knows our weakness. A humble prayer, offered with perseverance and accompanied by a reasonable effort to return to Him, can be deeply meritorious.

When we discover that we have become distracted, the simplest response is often the best: return calmly to prayer.

Without becoming angry with ourselves. Without turning every involuntary thought into a source of anxiety. Without abandoning our intention to pray.

Habitual Distraction

A different situation arises when we become accustomed to living in a state of constant distraction.

We move from one notification to another, continually check the news, change activities every few minutes, and feel uncomfortable when there is nothing to look at.

Over time, we may discover that we struggle to read an entire page, listen to someone without looking at our phone, or remain in silence for a few minutes.

It is unnecessary to attribute all these effects to a single cause. Fatigue, stress, worries, the work environment, and many other factors also influence our attention.

Nevertheless, the habit of constantly seeking stimuli can make sustained attention and recollection more difficult.

From a spiritual perspective, this matters because the interior life requires a certain capacity to pause, listen, meditate, and recognize the state of our conscience.

Faith does not consist merely of receiving religious information. Knowing many prayers, reading numerous Catholic articles, or accumulating videos of preachers does not necessarily mean that we are living in friendship with God.

The intellect needs to understand the truth, the will needs to choose the good, and the heart needs to learn to love what truly deserves to be loved.

If we constantly jump from one stimulus to another, we risk confusing the accumulation of



information with the formation of our souls.

Deliberately Sought Distraction

Finally, there is a third situation: when we consciously choose an activity that we know distracts us from an important duty or deliberately exposes us to sin.

Not every prolonged use of a phone is sinful. Not every form of entertainment is disordered. Not every curiosity is blameworthy.

Rest, recreation, and communication are legitimate goods. Christian morality does not demand a life without joy, friendship, or entertainment.

The problem arises when we freely choose something we know to be contrary to the moral good, or when we voluntarily give a secondary activity the place that belongs to a serious obligation.

Consider, for example, someone who deliberately neglects his children to spend hours consuming meaningless content; someone who uses social networks to slander another person; someone who deliberately seeks pornographic material; or someone who systematically abandons his duties to satisfy an insatiable curiosity.

In such situations, it is not enough to speak of a lack of concentration. We must examine moral responsibility and, where appropriate, acknowledge sin, repent, and seek the help necessary to change.

The lantern in the dream can serve precisely this purpose of examination: not to condemn ourselves for every passing thought, but to discover what choices we are making and where they are leading us.

6. “For Where Your Treasure Is, There Your Heart Will Be Also”: Our Lord’s Teaching

Sacred Scripture offers a decisive key to understanding the relationship between attention, desire, and spiritual life.

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew:



| *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

— Matthew 6:21.

These words do not refer directly to mobile phones, but they illuminate the problem we are examining perfectly.

What we habitually devote our time and attention to can reveal something about what we love, what we fear losing, and where we place our hope.

If a person constantly checks how many reactions his posts receive, perhaps he should ask himself how much his peace depends on the approval of others.

If he continually needs to check the news, perhaps he should examine whether he is seeking necessary information or attempting to relieve an anxiety that never seems to disappear.

If he cannot remain for a few minutes without entertainment, perhaps he needs to recover the ability to be alone with himself, recognize his concerns, and present them before God.

We must not jump to conclusions. An isolated behavior does not necessarily reveal a person's interior state. Nor would it be fair to judge someone for using a phone extensively when his work, family responsibilities, or communication needs require it.

Nevertheless, the Gospel question remains valid: Where is our treasure?

In the recognition of others?

In immediate gratification?

In curiosity about everything that happens?

In the accumulation of knowledge that we never put into practice?

Or in God, the salvation of our souls, and charity toward our neighbor?

The question is not exactly how many hours we devote to each activity, as though holiness could be calculated with an application. The question is whether our priorities truly reflect the hierarchy of goods we profess to believe in.



A Christian may use a digital tool for many hours to work, study, or evangelize and do so rightly. Another may use it for less time but in a disordered and harmful way.

What matters is the moral order of our actions and the general direction of our lives.

Attention Is Also a Form of Love

When we truly listen to another person, we give that person our attention. When we attend to a child who needs to talk, accompany a sick person, or listen to a suffering friend, we perform a concrete act of presence and charity.

The same is true, in its own particular way, of prayer.

This is not because God needs our attention in order to exist, but because we need to turn consciously toward Him to live our relationship with Him.

Prayer is not a competition in concentration or a technique for achieving a pleasant psychological state. It is an act of the person turning toward God: to adore Him, thank Him, ask His forgiveness, implore His help, and offer Him his life.

For this reason, the time we devote to prayer should not always consist of whatever remains after all our other activities.

If we pray only when there is nothing else left to do, we risk making God the last recipient of our time, when in reality He is our ultimate end.

Don Bosco's lantern forces us to ask whether we are giving things their proper place.

7. "Watch and Pray": The Spiritual Battle Against Distraction

In the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, we find words from Our Lord that constitute a true rule of spiritual life:

"Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

— Matthew 26:41.



Jesus speaks these words in Gethsemane, when the disciples cannot remain awake while He prepares to face His Passion.

The context is decisive. We are not dealing with a simple recommendation to organize our time better. The Lord speaks of spiritual vigilance, prayer, and human weakness in a moment of trial.

Christian vigilance consists in recognizing that our freedom can weaken, that our inclinations are not always properly ordered, and that we need God's grace to persevere in the good.

We must not confuse this vigilance with living in terror of anything that might distract us. Christian life is not an obsessive search for hidden dangers.

To be vigilant means to know ourselves humbly, recognize occasions of sin, avoid what we know harms us, and turn to the supernatural means God has provided for our sanctification.

In this sense, digital distractions can become a concrete opportunity to exercise virtue.

When we put our phones aside to listen to someone, we exercise charity.

When we resist the impulse to check a notification during prayer, we exercise self-control.

When we close a page that leads us to sinful thoughts or desires, we exercise temperance.

When we stop arguing on social media so as not to violate charity, we exercise prudence.

And when we return to prayer after becoming distracted, we exercise perseverance.

These are small acts, but moral life is formed precisely through concrete, repeated decisions.

Temperance: A Virtue Especially Necessary in Our Time

Catholic tradition teaches that temperance moderates our attraction to sensory pleasures and seeks balance in the use of created goods.

It does not destroy desire. It orders it.

A temperate person can enjoy a film, talk with friends, read the news, or use social networks without turning those activities into masters of his will.



Temperance helps us say “enough” when a legitimate activity begins to occupy too much space. It also helps us reject what is morally wrong, even when it is attractive.

For this reason, it is not enough to ask whether an activity is enjoyable. We must ask whether we are using it proportionately and whether it contributes to the integral good of our person.

Virtue does not consist of living in constant tension against every pleasure. It consists of enjoying legitimate goods within the order established by reason enlightened by faith.

A phone can serve the good, but it must not become a master.

Entertainment can be legitimate, but it must not destroy our ability to fulfill our duties.

Information can help us understand the world, but it must not replace wisdom.

And curiosity can lead us to knowledge, but it can also degenerate into an endless search for new things that prevents us from deepening our understanding of what we already know.

8. Inner Silence: Why We Need to Learn to Stop

One of the great spiritual difficulties of our time is that many people scarcely find moments of silence.

From the moment they wake up until they go to bed, they may be surrounded by sounds, images, messages, and stimuli. The phone accompanies them during journeys, meals, breaks, and even moments that were once reserved for thinking or praying.

Silence, however, has profound value in the Christian tradition.

Not because God can speak only when everything is physically quiet, but because we need to learn to listen without allowing every stimulus to demand our immediate attention.

Elijah the prophet experiences a particularly significant scene in the First Book of Kings. After the mighty wind, the earthquake, and the fire, he recognizes the divine presence in what is described as a gentle whisper, a soft breeze, or the sound of a delicate silence, depending on the translation.

The biblical text says:



| *"After the fire, a light silent sound."*

— 1 Kings 19:12, New American Bible Revised Edition.

Elijah's experience should not be reduced to a relaxation technique. The passage forms part of a story about an encounter with God and the renewal of the prophetic mission.

Nevertheless, it offers a lesson that we can prudently apply to our lives: what is loudest is not always what is most important, and what is most striking is not always what is truest.

The Gospel does not need to compete constantly with every stimulus in the world to retain its value. God's truth does not depend on being more spectacular than the latest video we have watched.

Sometimes we need to stop consuming religious content and begin truly meditating on what we have read. We need to close the book, turn off the screen, and ask ourselves what God is asking of us in the light of His Word.

We can listen to a magnificent sermon about charity and remain impatient with our family. We can read numerous articles about humility and continue seeking recognition. We can share prayers on social networks and neglect personal prayer.

Christian formation must lead us to conversion, not merely feed our curiosity.

Inner silence allows us to examine our conscience, recognize our faults, and listen to the concrete demands of the Gospel.

For this reason, it is worthwhile to recover moments of silence during the day, even if they are brief. Not as an anxiety-inducing obligation, but as an opportunity to order our thoughts and put God back at the center.

A few minutes of uninterrupted prayer can become a school of freedom.

9. Distractions Can Also Be Religious

There is a particularly subtle form of distraction that deserves special consideration: the kind that appears under a religious guise.



A person can spend hours reading Church news, following doctrinal debates, watching lectures, sharing quotations from saints, or arguing about liturgical questions.

All these activities can have legitimate value. Doctrinal formation is necessary, especially in an age when confused ideas about faith and morality abound.

But we must ask whether the knowledge we acquire truly helps us live the Gospel more faithfully.

It is possible to know many controversies while devoting little time to examining our conscience.

It is possible to publicly defend the importance of prayer and pray very little in private.

It is possible to argue about the reverence due to the liturgy and show little patience toward those who make mistakes.

It is possible to denounce the secularization of society and personally live as though God had nothing to say about our daily habits.

The danger does not lie in taking an interest in doctrine, but in using that interest as a substitute for conversion.

Christian truth is not an instrument for feeding our intellectual pride. It is a light that should lead us to recognize reality, love the good, and order our lives according to God's will.

Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches that virtue perfects human faculties so that they act according to their nature and end. Applied to our reflection, this means that knowledge must be integrated into a morally upright life.

It is not enough to know what is good. We must strive to do it.

Nor is it enough to identify what distracts us. We must make concrete decisions to restore order.

The lantern may have a religious, cultural, or intellectual appearance. It may even show us truthful content. But if it keeps us permanently occupied with secondary things and prevents us from fulfilling our essential duties, we must examine its place in our lives.

The question remains the same: does it lead us to God, or does it keep us so occupied that



we forget Him?

10. The Devil and Distractions: A Prudent Theological Interpretation

Don Bosco's dream presents the figure holding the lantern as a demonic character. It is therefore necessary to explain what this image means in the light of Catholic doctrine.

The Church teaches the real existence of Satan and the demons, spiritual creatures who, having freely rejected God, oppose His saving plan. The devil is a tempter, not a force equal to God. His power is limited, and the ultimate victory belongs to Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, it would be a theological mistake to claim that every distraction proceeds directly from a particular action of the devil.

Christian tradition recognizes different sources of spiritual difficulty: human weakness, disordered inclinations, external circumstances, and diabolical temptation. These realities may interact, but they should not be confused.

When someone becomes distracted during prayer because he is tired, worried, or facing an urgent responsibility, there is no reason to conclude that he has experienced a demonic attack.

When someone develops a habit of constantly checking his phone, we should not automatically attribute that behavior to a supernatural intervention.

Spiritual discernment requires prudence.

The ordinary action of temptation does not require extraordinary manifestations. It is enough for a person to find something that turns him away from the good attractive and eventually choose it.

Don Bosco's dream can be understood as a symbolic representation of this dynamic: temptation presents something that awakens our interest, diverts our will, and makes it difficult to accomplish a higher good.

There is no need to imagine that every notification conceals a demonic intervention. It is enough to recognize that human freedom can become trapped in disordered habits and that Christians must fight against sin with the help of grace.



Pastoral teaching must avoid two extremes.

The first consists of denying any spiritual dimension to temptation and reducing the problem to a purely technical issue.

The second consists of indiscriminately attributing every difficulty, every involuntary thought, or every problem of concentration to the devil.

The Catholic faith invites us to recognize spiritual combat without falling into superstition or losing our sense of personal responsibility.

The Christian response is clear: prayer, the sacraments, vigilance, virtue, formation of conscience, and trust in God's grace.

11. The Danger of Living While Watching Other People's Lives

Among the images that appear in Don Bosco's dream are family members, friends, familiar places, and old pastimes. The lantern does not show only material pleasures; it also offers memories, relationships, and scenes that awaken personal feelings.

This dimension allows us to reflect on one of the contemporary forms of distraction: constantly living with our attention fixed on what other people are doing.

Social networks allow us to remain in contact with family and friends, learn about important events, and share experiences. They can be valuable tools for combating loneliness and strengthening relationships.

But they can also feed constant comparison.

We observe other people's travels, celebrations, achievements, purchases, and apparently happy moments. We see selected images, carefully prepared posts, and fragments of lives that we do not fully know.

Without realizing it, we may begin measuring our own lives by other people's standards.

Why do others seem happier?

Why do they have more success?

Why do they receive more recognition?



Why do their plans progress while we encounter difficulties?

This comparison can feed envy, dissatisfaction, pride, or discouragement.

From a Christian perspective, we must remember that each person has a particular vocation and set of circumstances. Life is not a competition to obtain the greatest number of reactions, accumulate more experiences, or demonstrate that we are superior to others.

The Christian vocation consists of seeking holiness in the concrete circumstances in which God calls us to live.

A father who patiently cares for his children performs an act of enormous value, even if nobody posts it on the internet.

A sick person who offers his sufferings to God may live in profound union with Christ, even if his life appears less spectacular than that of those who constantly display their activities.

A worker who fulfills his duties honestly, an elderly person who prays for his family, or someone who quietly cares for a sick person may perform acts of charity that will never receive public recognition.

The value of a life is not measured by its visibility.

Our Lord reminds us, in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, of the importance of practicing prayer and almsgiving without seeking the admiration of others (cf. Matthew 6:1-6).

This does not mean forbidding every post or treating any recognition as suspicious. It means examining our intention: do we do good because it is good, or because we want others to admire us?

The lantern of comparison can steal our gratitude for the gifts we have received and turn us away from the concrete duties before us.

Sometimes, the best way to recover peace is to stop looking at other people's lives and return to caring for our own.



12. Digital Impurity: When the Screen Feeds the Passions

Don Bosco's account also includes sinful scenes among the images shown by the lantern. This detail allows us to address a particularly important issue from the standpoint of Catholic morality.

The internet has made it easier to access content that can feed lust, the objectification of people, and habits contrary to chastity.

Not every attractive image is sinful, nor does the involuntary appearance of an impure thought imply moral consent. This distinction is essential to avoid unnecessary scrupulosity.

But when a person deliberately seeks pornographic content, entertains disordered fantasies, or turns other human beings into objects of sexual gratification, he faces a genuine moral issue.

Catholic tradition teaches that chastity integrates sexuality into the person and orders it toward true love. It does not consist of despising the body or denying the goodness of human sexuality, but of living it according to the dignity of the person and God's design.

Pornography, by its very nature, presents sexual intimacy separated from personal self-giving and can encourage a way of looking at others that reduces them to objects of consumption.

The screen can make access to such content immediate, private, and apparently consequence-free. But the private nature of an action does not eliminate its moral dimension.

We must also remember that some people experience compulsive habits related to pornography consumption and need help to regain control of their behavior. In such cases, alongside spiritual direction and confession when appropriate, it may be advisable to seek professional psychological support.

The Christian response should not be limited to condemnation. It must also include hope, accompaniment, and concrete means of change.

Someone struggling with this problem can begin by identifying the circumstances that encourage temptation, avoiding content and situations that habitually lead him toward it, establishing technological limits, and recovering an orderly life of prayer, rest, and personal relationships.



If a fall occurs, he should not surrender to despair. Sincere repentance and trust in God's mercy make it possible to begin again.

Chastity is not achieved merely by avoiding certain images. It is cultivated by learning to look at others as persons created in the image of God, worthy of respect and never reducible to instruments of pleasure.

Breaking the lantern means, in this case, ceasing deliberately to feed what darkens our capacity to love.

13. The Loss of Time: A Spiritual and Moral Issue

Time is one of the most distinctive goods of our existence. We can recover money, acquire new knowledge, and rebuild certain relationships, but we cannot make an hour already lived return in exactly the same way.

Sacred Scripture invites us to recognize the brevity of life and live wisely.

The psalmist prays:

“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain wisdom of heart.”

— Psalm 90:12, New American Bible Revised Edition; Psalm 89:12 in the Vulgate numbering.

This prayer does not mean that we should live obsessed with productivity. Rest is necessary, recreation is legitimate, and we are not called to turn every minute into a task.

The question is learning to distinguish between rest that renews us and escapism that leaves us more scattered, between proportionate recreation and an activity that ends up absorbing all our attention.

Consider someone who arrives home exhausted after a working day. He decides to sit down for a few minutes to rest and check his phone. That decision may be perfectly reasonable.

But if those minutes systematically become hours, if he sleeps less than necessary, neglects his family, and abandons his religious practices, the habit deserves examination.



Not because all entertainment is bad, but because goods must be properly ordered.

Christians need time to work, rest, love, learn, serve others, and encounter God.

When a secondary activity absorbs the space needed to fulfill fundamental duties, something must change.

Saint Paul writes to the Ephesians:

“Watch carefully then how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise, making the most of the opportunity.”

— Ephesians 5:15-16, New American Bible Revised Edition.

This exhortation is extraordinarily relevant today.

Making good use of time does not mean filling every minute with obligations. It means living with an awareness of our vocation, without thoughtlessly surrendering our freedom to every passing stimulus.

A moment of rest can be good. An enjoyable conversation can be good. A film shared with the family can be good. The problem arises when we lose the ability to choose and simply keep watching because there is always something else.

Time is also a gift we can offer to God. When we care for a sick person, listen to a family member, educate our children, or fulfill our work honestly, we can live our Christian vocation through activities that do not have an explicitly religious appearance.

For this reason, the solution is not to replace every distraction with religious activities without discernment. It is to order our entire lives according to love of God and neighbor.

14. How Can We Regain Control of Our Attention? A Practical Spiritual Guide

Reflection on Don Bosco's dream should lead us to concrete decisions. It would be of little use to recognize the danger of distractions if we continued living exactly as before.



Not everyone needs the same measures. Some people use their phones in a balanced way; others have developed habits that are difficult to change. For this reason, it is advisable to begin with an honest examination, without comparing ourselves with others.

First Measure: Establish Protected Times for Prayer

It is advisable to reserve a specific time each day for personal prayer and protect it, as far as possible, from digital interruptions.

This might be in the morning, before beginning our duties, or in the evening, as the day draws to a close.

During that time, it is useful to silence notifications and put the phone aside if we do not need it for prayer.

If we use a prayer application, we can prepare the content beforehand to avoid letting the reading of a prayer lead us to consult other services.

Regularity is often more important than beginning with an excessively long period that later proves difficult to maintain.

Someone who has not developed the habit of prayer can begin with ten minutes of reading the Gospel, meditation, and conversation with God, gradually extending the time according to his circumstances.

The important thing is to offer God a real space rather than always leaving prayer until all the other activities have finished.

Second Measure: Recover the Rosary as a School of Recollection

The Holy Rosary can help us educate our attention through the repeated prayer of the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be, while we meditate on the mysteries of the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Its repetition is not an empty formula. When prayed with faith, it allows vocal prayer to accompany meditation on the mysteries of our Redemption.

Distractions are normal. The response is to return to the mystery we are contemplating.

We can help ourselves by using a crucifix, a sacred image, or a quiet place. We can also pray



with other people, provided that doing so helps us persevere.

If we use a phone to follow the prayers, it is advisable to prepare the text before beginning and avoid consulting other content during the Rosary.

The goal is not to achieve perfect psychological concentration, but to persevere in prayer with reverence and trust.

Third Measure: Limit Notifications

Not every notification deserves to interrupt what we are doing.

We can disable those that are unnecessary, establish specific times for checking email and social networks, and reserve certain periods for replying to messages.

People who need to remain reachable for family, work, or health reasons can adapt these measures to their circumstances.

The purpose is not to isolate ourselves from others, but to recover the ability to decide when to attend to a communication and when to remain focused on an important activity.

Fourth Measure: Avoid Using the Phone During the First and Last Moments of the Day

Beginning the day by immediately checking social networks can cause our attention to become occupied with other people's concerns before we have had time to order our own thoughts.

Similarly, spending the last hour of the night jumping from one piece of content to another can make rest more difficult and displace the examination of conscience or prayer before sleep.

An alternative is to devote the first few minutes of the morning to thanking God, offering Him the day, and entrusting our duties to Him.

At night, we can briefly review how we have lived, acknowledge our faults, ask forgiveness, and give thanks for the blessings we have received.

It is not necessary to establish identical, rigid rules for everyone. It is enough to recover a degree of freedom from the habit of automatically checking the screen.



Fifth Measure: Examine the Content, Not Just the Time

Reducing the number of hours spent looking at screens can be useful, but it does not solve every problem.

We also need to ask ourselves what we are consuming.

Does the content we watch help us understand reality better?

Does it bring us closer to the truth or feed constant suspicion?

Does it help us understand others or encourage contempt?

Does it allow us to rest or leave us unsettled?

Does it form us in virtue or feed passions that we later struggle to control?

Do we use social networks to evangelize and serve, or to seek approval and argue endlessly?

This examination must be sincere and balanced. Not every piece of content must produce an immediate moral improvement to be legitimate, but we should pay attention to the habitual effects of our choices.

Sixth Measure: Recover Personal Interaction

No digital communication can completely replace physical presence, a thoughtful conversation, or the companionship of someone who is suffering.

We can establish family time without phones, listen to our children without interruptions, visit elderly people, and devote time to those who need company.

We can also use technology to reach people who live far away, maintain friendships, and accompany those who cannot leave their homes.

The point is to keep these means at the service of human relationships, rather than subordinating human relationships to the screen.

Seventh Measure: Turn to the Sacraments and Spiritual Accompaniment

When we discover that our distractions are connected with specific sins, we must also



address them through sacramental life.

Sacramental confession offers God's forgiveness to those who sincerely repent, are willing to abandon sin, and receive absolution from the priest.

Spiritual direction can help us recognize patterns of behavior, order our devotional practices, and distinguish between ordinary difficulties and problems requiring special attention.

If phone use becomes compulsive and seriously harms work, relationships, sleep, or daily life, it may also be advisable to consult a qualified professional.

Seeking help does not contradict trust in God. Grace does not eliminate the need to use the prudent human means available to us.

Eighth Measure: Replace the Habit Rather Than Merely Fighting It

When we eliminate an activity that occupies a great deal of time, we need to decide what we will do with the time we recover.

If we simply forbid ourselves from looking at the phone without incorporating other activities, we may return to the old habit as soon as boredom appears.

We can recover reading, walking, exercise, conversation, study, service to others, or prayer.

Not every moment needs to be occupied. Learning to remain without constant stimuli can also help us recover serenity.

The goal is not to live constantly busy, but to learn to use our freedom to choose what is truly worthwhile.

15. A Rule of Christian Life for Using Screens

The following proposals can serve as a starting point for anyone who wishes to order his digital life from a Catholic perspective.

Seven Commitments for Recovering Attention

A practical proposal to review over the course of a week and adapt to one's own responsibilities.



- Begin the day with prayer before checking social networks.
- Reserve a daily time for prayer without unnecessary interruptions.
- Silence notifications that do not require immediate attention.
- Do not check the phone during Mass, except when genuinely necessary.
- Avoid content that deliberately leads to sin or feeds harmful habits.
- Devote time each day to giving full attention to family members or another person.
- End the day with a brief examination of conscience and a prayer.

This proposal is not intended to replace a personal spiritual plan or establish a universal obligation. It is a tool for examining habits and making proportionate changes.

Perseverance is more important than immediate perfection.

If we fail to fulfill one of these commitments on a particular day, we can acknowledge it, learn from what happened, and begin again. We do not need to turn every failure into a reason to abandon our purpose.

Christian life is a journey of conversion sustained by grace.

16. What Should Parents and Educators Do About the Lantern of Our Time?

Don Bosco's warning takes on particular importance when we think about children and adolescents.

The saint devoted much of his life to educating the young because he understood that the formation of character and conscience requires time, accompaniment, and a suitable environment.

Today's parents face a complex reality. Digital devices offer educational, creative, and social opportunities, but they also expose minors to inappropriate content, unwanted contacts, social pressure, and habits of use that can be difficult to regulate.

The response should not consist merely of handing over a device without guidance or forbidding everything without explanation.

Children need to learn progressively how to use technology with prudence, responsibility, and self-control.



Educate Through Example

It is difficult to teach a child that the phone must not take over everything if adults constantly check their own screens.

Children learn as much from the behavior they observe as from the rules they receive.

A father who puts away his phone to listen to his child conveys a powerful message: people matter more than notifications.

A family that prays together, participates in Mass, and reserves time to talk teaches that certain goods deserve attention and respect.

Setting an example does not require a perfect family. It requires consistency, a willingness to acknowledge our own mistakes, and a determination to improve.

Establish Proportionate Limits

Minors need clear rules appropriate to their age. Usage schedules, content supervision, and screen-free spaces can help protect their development.

It is also important to explain the reasons behind these rules. The ultimate goal is not to control every movement of a child indefinitely, but to help the child develop the ability to govern himself.

Christian education should not form people who are incapable of choosing when external supervision disappears. It should form consciences capable of recognizing the good and choosing it freely.

Teach the Difference Between What Is Attractive and What Is Good

One of the most important lessons of Don Bosco's dream lies precisely in this distinction.

Something can be attractive without being good for us.

Something can provide immediate pleasure and produce harmful consequences.

Something can be popular and lack genuine value.

Something can seem urgent without being important.



Young people need to learn to examine critically what they see, recognize persuasive strategies, and understand that not everything appearing on a screen deserves their time.

This education should also include respect for human dignity, chastity, prudence in communication, and responsibility for what is published.

Do Not Reduce Christian Education to Fear

The image of the devil in the dream can impress young people, but Christian education should not be based exclusively on generating fear.

Don Bosco understood that formation requires reason, religion, and loving-kindness. Children need to understand that virtue is not an arbitrary limitation, but a path toward fuller freedom.

The goal is not for them to fear every device. It is for them to learn to use technology without becoming enslaved to it.

We do not want young people who reject all technology out of fear, but people capable of recognizing when a tool serves the good and when it is necessary to step away from it.

The Christian response to distraction is not contempt for the world, but the ordering of goods according to truth.

17. The Church, Evangelization, and Technology: Can the Lantern Become an Instrument of Apostolate?

It would be a mistake to conclude that technology can only turn us away from God.

The same means that can distract us can also serve evangelization, doctrinal formation, and communal prayer.

A person who lives far from his parish may follow a broadcast of Mass when attending in person is impossible. A sick person may listen to the prayers of the Church from his room. A Catholic can study the Catechism, read documents of the Magisterium, learn about the lives of the saints, and deepen his understanding of Sacred Scripture through digital resources.

Social networks also make it possible to proclaim the Gospel, disseminate Catholic teaching, and accompany people seeking answers to their questions about the faith.



We should not despise these opportunities.

But the apostolic use of technology requires the same discernment as any other activity.

Publishing religious content does not guarantee that we are performing spiritually fruitful work. Evangelization requires truth, charity, prudence, and right intention.

A post may convey correct teaching in an unnecessarily aggressive manner. A doctrinal debate may begin with a legitimate desire to defend the faith and end up feeding vanity or hostility.

Similarly, we may devote too much time to measuring the reach of our publications, as though the number of followers or reactions determined the spiritual value of our work.

The apostolic mission is not measured exclusively by visibility.

Our Lord reminds us that the sower scatters the seed and that its growth does not depend solely on human effort (cf. Mark 4:26–29). Evangelization requires work, but also humility and trust in God's action.

Technology must be an instrument at the service of the mission, not the criterion that determines the content of the message.

If we use social networks to bring others closer to Christ, we should strive to ensure that our digital presence leads, where appropriate, to real Christian life: prayer, sacramental participation, charity, formation, and ecclesial communion.

The goal is not to keep people permanently connected to our content. It is to help them grow in truth and love for God.

The lantern is not necessarily an enemy of light. It can transmit knowledge, open opportunities, and facilitate apostolate. The problem begins when the instrument ceases to serve the purpose for which it should be used.

18. A Warning Against Curiosity Without Limits

There is another form of distraction that deserves special attention: the need to know everything.

News items follow one another without pause. Every event generates new interpretations,



every controversy produces reactions, and every debate seems to demand an immediate opinion.

We can end up believing that we need to be informed about everything in order to understand the world or fulfill our responsibilities.

However, no human being can know every event or answer every question that arises each day.

Prudence requires us to distinguish between information necessary for fulfilling our duties and curiosity that simply keeps us occupied.

This is particularly important when following religious, political, or social news that provokes anxiety, indignation, or fear.

It is legitimate to inform ourselves about difficulties affecting the Church, society, or vulnerable people. It is also legitimate to report injustices and seek solutions.

But remaining constantly exposed to worrying news is not necessarily equivalent to acting responsibly.

We can spend hours reading about an injustice without taking any concrete action to help those suffering from it. We can become indignant at the mistakes of others while neglecting our own responsibilities.

Information is valuable when it helps us understand reality and act prudently. It can become a distraction when it feeds constant unease that does not translate into deeper knowledge, charity, or responsibility.

The virtue of studiousness, in the Thomistic tradition, helps order the desire to know. It does not condemn knowledge, but directs it toward truth and prevents curiosity from becoming a disordered search for novelty.

This teaching retains enormous importance in the digital age.

We do not need to know everything. We need to know sufficiently what concerns us, recognize our limitations, and devote time to the goods we truly can and ought to accomplish.



19. Distraction as an Escape From Ourselves

Sometimes we seek a screen not because we have something important to do, but because we do not want to remain alone with our thoughts.

Silence can make us aware of worries we would prefer to avoid. We may remember an unfinished conversation, a difficult decision, a mistake we have made, or a relationship that needs to be repaired.

Distraction offers immediate relief: while we watch content, we stop paying attention to what troubles us.

This mechanism is not exclusive to technology. Throughout history, human beings have used numerous activities to avoid confronting themselves.

But the constant availability of stimuli can make such avoidance easier.

From a spiritual perspective, this reality deserves to be examined with sensitivity. Not every search for entertainment is an escape from our inner lives, and we should not interpret emotional difficulties as moral failings without further consideration.

There are people who need rest, distraction, or help in dealing with a painful situation. Christian accompaniment must recognize these needs with charity.

Nevertheless, conversion also requires a certain willingness to look honestly at our own lives.

The examination of conscience invites us to ask how we have lived, what decisions we need to correct, whom we have hurt, and which duties we are neglecting.

Prayer allows us to present our worries to God without needing to resolve them all immediately.

The Sacrament of Penance offers us an encounter with divine mercy when we acknowledge our sins and repent of them.

And a conversation with a trusted person can help us face difficulties we do not know how to resolve on our own.

The lantern can become a form of escapism when we systematically use it to avoid thinking, feeling, or facing our responsibilities.



Breaking it, in this case, means recovering the courage to face the truth about ourselves.

20. What Does the Lantern Teach Us About Human Freedom?

We arrive here at a central question in moral theology: freedom.

Christian freedom does not consist simply of being able to do whatever we feel like doing at any given moment. It consists of the ability to choose the good consciously and responsibly.

A person can have access to countless options and yet experience very limited freedom if he cannot resist his impulses.

He may have thousands of pieces of content available and be unable to stop consuming them.

He may claim that he uses his phone whenever he wants, but discover that he checks the screen automatically even after deciding not to.

He may have countless communication options and end up isolating himself from the people nearby.

An abundance of choices does not guarantee interior freedom.

Catholic tradition teaches that virtue strengthens our ability to choose the good. Temperance, prudence, and fortitude help us order our desires, deliberate correctly, and persevere in good decisions.

God's grace does not destroy our freedom but heals and elevates it. For this reason, the struggle against disordered habits is not merely a matter of willpower: it is also part of our spiritual life.

Prayer, the sacraments, spiritual accompaniment, and the practice of the virtues can help us recover a freedom that has weakened.

Nevertheless, we must avoid hastily judging those who struggle to control their use of technology. Habits can be complex, and personal circumstances differ greatly.

The appropriate response combines responsibility, prudence, patience, and proportionate assistance.



The goal is not to ensure that we never feel the desire to check our phones. It is to learn to decide when to do so, why we are doing it, and when we should put the device aside.

In spiritual terms, it means ensuring that our will does not become subordinate to every stimulus appearing before us.

Don Bosco's lantern is, in this sense, an invitation to recover mastery over our own actions.

21. Should We Be Afraid of Distractions?

The Christian response cannot be reduced to fear.

We must recognize the danger of disordered habits, but we must also remember that God does not call us to live in constant anxiety about the possibility of making mistakes.

Our Lord knows our weakness. Spiritual life includes struggles, falls, periods of dryness, and moments when prayer becomes difficult.

We should not interpret every difficulty as a sign of divine abandonment.

Christian perseverance does not consist of never experiencing distractions, but of continuing to seek God with humility and trust.

If, during the Rosary, we discover that we have spent several minutes thinking about other things, we can return to the mystery we are contemplating.

If we realize that we have devoted too much time to a digital activity, we can reorganize our habits.

If we have fallen into sin, we can repent, go to confession when appropriate, and begin again.

If we struggle to concentrate for reasons involving health, fatigue, or personal worries, we can adapt our prayer practices and seek suitable guidance.

Holiness is not a display of psychological perfection. It is a life of union with God that develops through grace, faith, charity, and perseverance.

For this reason, the lantern should not become a source of terror, but a call to vigilance and hope.



Christians are not defenseless against temptation. They have the Word of God, prayer, the sacraments, the Church's teaching, the example of the saints, and the help of the Christian community.

And, above all, they have Jesus Christ, who has conquered sin and death.

22. The Cross Before the Screen: Recovering the True Hierarchy of Goods

The teaching attributed to Don Bosco proposes that we raise our eyes toward the Cross.

This image contains a profound response to the problem of distraction.

The Cross reminds us that human life does not find its fullness in the immediate satisfaction of every desire, but in self-giving love.

Christ did not constantly seek what was most comfortable, most spectacular, or most likely to bring Him recognition. He fulfilled the Father's will and gave His life for our salvation.

In the Cross, we contemplate love carried to the extreme, obedience, self-giving, and God's victory over sin.

For this reason, the Cross helps us establish a hierarchy of goods.

Not everything that attracts us deserves first place. Not everything that entertains us makes us better. Not everything that provides immediate satisfaction contributes to our true happiness.

Christians are called to order their desires according to love of God and neighbor.

This does not imply despising the good things in life. Friendship, rest, culture, beauty, work, and legitimate recreation can all form part of a fully Christian existence.

But none of these goods should become absolute.

When an activity prevents us from fulfilling an important duty, when a habit turns us away from prayer, or when a pleasure deliberately leads us into sin, we must restore order.

Looking at the Cross means remembering that true love sometimes requires us to give up



something attractive in order to choose what we know is good.

It means putting down the phone to attend to a family member.

It means giving up an unnecessary argument to preserve charity.

It means closing a page that leads us into sin.

It means devoting time to prayer even when we feel tempted to postpone it.

It means patiently listening to someone who needs our help, even though we would prefer to continue with a more entertaining activity.

These are small decisions that can transform the way we live.

The Cross does not eliminate every distraction, but it reminds us of what deserves to occupy the center of our existence.

23. A Final Reflection: Let Us Not Allow the Lantern to Steal Heaven From Us

Let us return for a moment to the opening scene.

The church remains full of young people. The altar is still prepared. Christ is present in the sacrament. The invitation to draw near to Him remains open.

But many of the boys continue watching the images shown by the lantern.

They do not need to physically leave the church to miss the opportunity to draw near to the Lord. It is enough for their attention to remain captivated by something else.

This is the spiritual power of the account.

We can be close to the means of grace and yet neglect them. We can know the truth and fail to live according to it. We can have access to countless religious resources and leave prayer until later. We can speak about God while devoting very little actual space to Him in our lives.

We can also use those same resources to grow in faith, help others, and proclaim the Gospel.

The difference does not depend exclusively on the instruments available to us. It depends on



how we use them, the habits we cultivate, and the moral direction of our decisions.

For this reason, it would be too simplistic to conclude that the lantern in the dream is simply the mobile phone. The comparison is useful, but the teaching is broader.

The lantern may be a screen, but it may also be vanity, the desire for recognition, disordered curiosity, attachment to money, the constant pursuit of pleasure, or any other inclination that makes us forget our duties and our ultimate end.

We do not need to live in fear of everything we enjoy. We need to learn to love things in their proper measure.

Technology can be an instrument of knowledge, communication, and apostolate. Entertainment can be legitimate. Information can help us understand the world. Friendship can provide genuine joy.

But none of these goods can replace God.

Our hearts were created for truth, goodness, and love. No endless succession of stimuli can fully satisfy that deep desire for happiness.

Saint Augustine expressed this human longing at the beginning of his *Confessions* with a statement that continues to resonate through the centuries: our hearts remain restless until they rest in God.

That restlessness is not resolved by accumulating novelties. It finds direction when we recognize our ultimate end and learn to order our lives accordingly.

The warning of the lantern invites us to examine what occupies our attention, what feeds our desires, and what place we give to prayer, the Eucharist, and charity.

It is not a matter of measuring holiness by the number of hours we spend disconnected. It is a matter of recovering the interior freedom needed to live as Christians.

Perhaps the first step is very simple.

Turn off the screen for a few minutes.

Open the Gospel.



Kneel before a crucifix.

Pray a Hail Mary.

Give thanks for the blessings we have received.

Ask forgiveness for our faults.

And put God back at the center.

Not because the world beyond the screen lacks value, but because everything acquires its true meaning when ordered toward the love of God.

The lantern can offer us thousands of images. It can show us places we want to visit, people we admire, pleasures that attract us, and news that awakens our curiosity.

But no image can replace an encounter with Christ.

No notification can give us sacramental grace.

No digital recognition can replace the peace of an upright conscience.

No entertainment can take the place of the eternal happiness for which we were created.

And no screen should prevent us from hearing the Lord's call.

Therefore, when we feel tempted to keep watching what turns us away from what is essential, let us remember the spiritual lesson we can draw from Saint John Bosco's dream.

Let us not allow a passing light to make us forget the true Light.

Christ does not call us to live enclosed in fear or to despise the good things of this world. He calls us to use our freedom to love, serve, pray, and walk toward holiness.

The lantern may remain illuminated. The decision to keep looking at it or to raise our eyes toward God belongs to us.

And when the time comes to meet Our Lord definitively, it will not be the images we have watched that give meaning to our lives, but the love with which we have responded to His grace.



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May Saint John Bosco intercede for our young people, for families, for educators, and for all those who struggle to recover inner silence amid the noise of the world.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary teach us to keep the Word of God in our hearts, as she did, and not allow passing concerns to extinguish our spiritual life.

And may Jesus Christ, present in the Holy Eucharist, always be the center of our thoughts, the foundation of our decisions, and the ultimate goal of our existence.

For true victory does not consist in turning off every screen, but in preventing anything created from taking the place that belongs to God.

Long live Christ the King!