



Introduction: A silent evil disguised as eternal youth

We live in a world that idolizes youth. Instant gratification is rewarded, spontaneity is applauded, lightness is praised, and anything that implies responsibility, maturity, or sacrifice is avoided. In the midst of this culture, an ancient figure appears—more relevant than ever: the *Puer Aeternus*, the “eternal boy,” the man who refuses to grow up.

But this is not merely a psychological or social issue. It is a **sickness of the soul**, a spiritual distortion that directly affects our relationship with God, with others, and with ourselves. In this article, I will walk you through what the *Puer Aeternus* is, how it manifests today, what its theological root is, and what a Christian can do to break free from this illusion of immaturity.

I. What is the *Puer Aeternus*? A brief history of the concept

The term *Puer Aeternus*, Latin for “eternal child,” was popularized by psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung. He used it to describe people—mostly men—who, despite reaching adulthood, maintain a childish attitude: fear of commitment, rejection of responsibilities, fascination with novelty, idealization of freedom, and emotional dependence disguised as independence.

This figure has mythical roots. In Roman mythology, *Iuventus* was the goddess of eternal youth. In the Christian world, however, youth is not a desirable perpetual state, but a stage meant to mature into virtue, wisdom, and self-giving.

The problem is that the modern *Puer Aeternus* has also invaded spiritual life: many Christians live a superficial, whimsical, emotional faith that avoids suffering and rejects the demands of the Gospel. The real tragedy is not that we are young, but that we **do not want to grow in Christ**.

II. The theological dimension: Why this problem affects your soul

Scripture is not ambiguous about this. Saint Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, speaks with strength:

“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I



*reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of
childhood behind me.”*
(1 Corinthians 13:11)

This passage is key. The apostle does not despise spiritual childhood (which we all experience at the beginning of our faith journey), but he makes it clear that **maturity is a duty for every Christian**. Christ does not call us to remain in spiritual diapers but to walk toward fullness: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

The *Puer Aeternus* is, deep down, **a denial of the process of sanctification**. It is living a faith based on feelings, without the cross, without depth, without commitment. It is resisting the call to carry the cross daily. It is expecting a God who pampers us, not a Father who forms us. In this sense, it is a rejection—conscious or unconscious—of mature divine sonship.

III. How the *Puer Aeternus* appears today

Even if it's not always visible, this “eternal child” is everywhere:

- **In the young person who seeks only emotional retreats but not frequent confession.**
- **In the adult who attends Mass only if “they feel like it,” and gets upset if the homily is demanding.**
- **In the Catholic who refuses to take on parish responsibilities because “the time isn't right.”**
- **In the believer who changes communities, spiritual directors, or liturgical styles every few months because they get “bored.”**
- **In the man who avoids marriage, fatherhood, or long-term commitments “to preserve his freedom.”**

These are just a few examples. The truth is that the *Puer Aeternus* is **a universal temptation**, a regression disguised as freedom, an immaturity that prevents Christ from being formed in us (cf. Galatians 4:19).



IV. The spiritual remedy: How to grow and mature in Christ

1. **Recognize immaturity**

The first key is to identify the areas in which we act like spiritual children. Ask yourself honestly:

- Do I avoid commitment with excuses?
- Do I seek a spirituality that entertains me more than transforms me?
- Do I resist suffering and correction?
- Do I constantly change groups, communities, or spiritual disciplines?

Without diagnosis, there is no healing.

2. **Adopt a spirituality of the Cross**

A mature Christian does not seek consolation, but the Cross. As Saint Teresa of Avila said:

“*The soul that exercises itself most in suffering, profits the most.*”

Accepting pain, God’s silence, and interior struggle is a sign of maturity. The child wants everything immediately; the adult waits, perseveres, and offers himself.

3. **Commit to serious formation**

To mature is also to **educate the mind and heart**. Motivational quotes or Instagram reels are not enough. You must read the Gospel, the Catechism, the lives of the saints, and classic spiritual texts. Only a well-formed faith can withstand the world’s storms.

4. **Live the sacraments as a school of maturity**

Frequent confession forces us to see ourselves in truth. The Eucharist, received with reverence and awareness, nourishes us with Christ’s own life. Prayer draws us out of ourselves. Spiritual maturity is forged in the silence of the Tabernacle, not in the noise of religious entertainment.



5. Live by missions, not emotions

The *Puer Aeternus* lives by moods. The mature Christian lives by **vocation**. Spiritual life does not depend on how I feel today but on **to whom I belong**. If I belong to Christ, I must carry the Cross with Him. I must love, serve, and persevere... even when I don't feel like it.

V. A practical guide to overcoming the *Puer Aeternus*

1. Make a spiritual examination of your maturity.

Set aside time this week to reflect on the areas of your life where you are avoiding growth.

2. Choose a demanding spiritual practice and stick to it for 30 days.

For example: pray the Rosary daily, go to confession weekly, wake up 30 minutes earlier for silent prayer, fast on Fridays. Don't wait to “feel like it.” Just do it.

3. Commit to a single community.

Stop wandering. Choose a parish, a group, a mission—and stay. Persevere even when you're not “motivated.” Stability is a sign of maturity.

4. Seek out a serious spiritual guide.

A priest, a religious, or a mature layperson who can help you grow. Not someone who just encourages you, but who corrects and forms you.

5. Read the biography of a spiritually mature saint.

Recommendations: *Saint Teresa of Ávila*, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, *Saint Philip Neri*, *Saint José Sánchez del Río* (a young person, yes—but with a martyr's soul), *Saint Gianna Beretta Molla*.

Conclusion: No more “nursery faith”

The world needs men and women **mature in faith**, capable of carrying others, suffering for love, persevering in small things, and giving their lives without expecting applause. Being Christian is not about preserving eternal youth—it's about reaching the stature of Christ.

As Saint Paul says:



*“Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the
Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of
the fullness of Christ.”
(Ephesians 4:13)*

Don't settle for being an eternal child. God did not create you to be entertained—He created you to **love with all your heart, soul, and strength**. Maturity is not losing joy—it's **placing it at the service of the Kingdom**. It's not becoming rigid—it's becoming firm. It's not stopping your dreams—it's beginning to build.

May the Lord grant you growth in wisdom, self-giving, and depth. And if any part of you still clings to the *Puer Aeternus*, may His grace awaken you, lift you up, and lead you to walk as a true child of God.