

WAGING THE BATTLE AGAINST SIN



TEEN YOUTH NIGHT 2007-2008

Activity 2

**The Diocesan Apostolate For Youth
American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the U.S.A.**

TEEN YOUTH NIGHT

2007-2008 – Activity No .2

Theme: Waging the Battle Against Sin.

Overview: Our youth will be challenged to become warriors for Christ, by their conscious choice to engage in spiritual warfare against sin. Our youth will be reminded of the spiritual weaponry of the Church which is at their disposal to help them win this battle, which will lead them to spiritual victory and eternal life. A discussion about the present difficulties from a military standpoint in the Iraq War based on an AP news story and a short You-Tube video, will be used to demonstrate the need for vigilance, spiritual discernment, and discipline in waging an equally challenging war against, the principalities and powers of the Evil One.

Materials:

1. Associated Press Article *Knowing the Enemy Difficult in Iraq* 10/08/07 (Attached)
2. Computer with high speed internet connection to view You Tube Video Clip *My War Diary* – Soldiers account of Insurgent Attack <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q--tv7As42U>
3. Yahoo Sports Interview: *Tuesday conversation: Troy Polamalu* – How Troy Fights the Spiritual Battle
4. Guided discussion with questions and answers on the theme (Attached)
5. Question box (Leader is to make a small question box where youth can place anonymous questions about any aspect of Orthodoxy, Contemporary Moral Issues Etc in it for future discussion)
6. Pre-cut slips of paper for youth to write questions for the question box.
7. Pencils/pens for each youth.
8. Concluding Prayer or Evening Prayers – *Come to Me Prayer Book*
9. Icon and Candle for Meeting Area (Optional)

OUTLINE

1. Informal Socialization (10 minutes)
2. Meal – (Pizza) - (20 minutes – Optional)
3. Welcome/ Introduction of Theme/ Pass out article *Knowing the Enemy Difficult in Iraq* and allow time to skim read. (5 minutes)
4. Guided discussion on the theme (30-40 minutes) (See attached Discussion Guide)
Includes viewing of U-tube video *My War Diary* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q--tv7As42U>
and a review of Yahoo Sports Article on Troy Polamalu
5. After completing the discussion, - Give youth pre-cut slips of paper to write questions for future Q. & A. sessions (Answer a question from last session – select and prepare answer in advance) (10 minutes)
6. Discussion of Coming Youth Activities/Charitable Outreach Projects – Jr. ACRY is again sponsoring a Diocesan Wide- Youth Project for the benefit of St. John The Compassionate Mission (10 minutes)
7. Conclusion/Prayer (5 Minutes)

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Today we will be speaking to our youth about how the church helps us to wage the war against sin. A recent AP News story and viewing a short video about the strategic difficulties in waging the war in Iraq, will be used as a spring board to discussing our personal difficulties in fighting the spiritual war with Satan. After the participants have finished scanning the attached article "Knowing the Enemy Difficult in Iraq" viewing the You-Tube Video "My War Diary," begin the discussion by asking the following questions, pausing to interject the appropriate "Talking Points" which have been provided to help feed the discussion.

- 1. What is the objective of our present military operation in Iraq? (To help stabilize the country, help Iraqi people to take responsibility for their own security so that they can live a calm and peaceful life.)*
- 2. From a military standpoint, what makes the war in Iraq so difficult to fight? (It is difficult to know who the enemy is, people disguise themselves as civilians, willing to die in suicide bombings. Ancient feuds between various ethnic groups, Shiites, Kurds, etc.)*
- 3. How must our military personnel be trained to survive in Iraq. (They must always be on guard, (vigilant) observant, never let their guard down, and be able to sense in advance if they are entering into a hostile situation (Discernment)*
- 4. What weapons are the soldiers given to protect themselves and the Iraqi people? (Guns, tanks, armored vehicles, bullet proof vests)*

Talking Point

The saints of the Church have described the struggle that you and I face on a daily basis as Christians to do the will of God and follow the teachings of the Church as a spiritual battle. St. Nicodemus, an 18th century Saint who lived on Mt Athos in Greece wrote a book called Unseen Warfare in which he talked about the difficulties of walking on the path of holiness towards the Kingdom of God. Whether we realize it or not there is a spiritual battle being waged around us. Our guardian angels are protecting us, the saints are praying for us, and of course the Evil One and his warriors are trying every way possible to tempt us and lead us away from God. This unseen warfare is much like the battle against the "Unknown Enemy" that our American Soldiers are fighting today.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Did God originally intend for us to have to wage a spiritual battle, for the salvation of our souls? (No, He created Adam and Eve to live in paradise forever, without pain, suffering or any kind of illness.)*
- 2. When did mankind's struggle or battle with sin begin? (It began with the Fall of Adam and Eve, their disobeying God by listening to the serpent eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they misused their free will)*
- 3. What were the consequences of the Fall of Adam and Eve (They were banished from Paradise and had to experience, pain suffering and death anyone who died until the time of Christ's Resurrection were imprisoned in Hell)*

4. While Christ conquered Death and opened the gates of Paradise upon His Death and Resurrection, why do we still have to struggle to avoid sin and evil? (*We have free will and know the difference between good and evil and are free to choose either, but must suffer the consequences of our actions. In addition we have to contend with Satan and his fallen angels who misused their free will, by rebelling against God*)
5. As Christians, what is the goal of objective of the spiritual war we are engaged in fighting (*Eternal life, Salvation to become who God intends us to be, to be fully alive truly at peace and content*)
6. How does the Church prepare us to fight the spiritual battle (*Baptism and Chrismation.*)
7. What weapons does the Church give us to fight and be victorious over sin (*Prayer, fasting, almsgiving, self-denial, sacraments of the Church – they teach us how to say no to the Evil one and unite us to God*)

At this point have them quickly read the attached article *Tuesday conversation: Troy Polamalu.*

Talking Point:

Point out to your teens what weapons Troy Polamalu, a football star with the Pittsburgh Steelers uses to fight the unseen warfare. Because Troy is a sports star, he is extremely vulnerable to the workings of the demons of pride and vain glory, and therefore he makes time to strengthen his soul. Every Tuesday he spends the morning going to Matins and Divine Liturgy at a woman's monastery near his home with his wife as often he is on the road on Sunday. He receives the sacraments and seeks spiritual guidance from the nuns. It is important to note that Troy recognizes that God is more important than sports for he tells the reporter who interviewed him, God is first, his wife second and football is third. While he could use his busy schedule as an excuse not to attend Church during football season, he makes a special effort to do so, recognizing the need to regularly attend Church and receive the sacraments. Troy is a good example for our young people and especially those who do sports to emulate. Troy realizes that habitually missing Liturgy is detrimental to the spiritual life, for when we do, we are deprived of the spiritual nourishment that we need to be victorious in the battle against sin.

8. Which do you think is harder to fight, spiritual battle or physical?(*This is an opinion question, but ideally, the response should be equally as difficult or even more so since it is even harder to know who the enemy is as the devil often appears as an angel of light.*)

WRAP – UP

(Read this beautiful quote from St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain)

The warriors who take part in this unseen war are all who are Christians; and their commander is our Lord Jesus Christ, surrounded and accompanied by His marshals and generals, that is, by all the hierarchies of angels and saints. The arena, the field of battle, the site where the fight actually takes place is our own heart and all our inner man. The time of battle is our Whole life,

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but...against spiritual wickedness in high places.
(Ephesians. 6:12)



PATROL BASE HAWKS, Iraq - When U.S. sentries fatally shot three guards near an Iraqi-manned checkpoint south of Baghdad, they thought they were targeting enemy fighters planting roadside bombs, according to the American commander of the region.

The shootings, which are still under investigation, underscore a new dilemma facing U.S. troops as former fighters join forces against extremists and Iraqis are increasingly forced to take up arms to protect themselves - how does one distinguish them from the enemy?

The U.S. military said the American troops shot the three civilians Thursday near a checkpoint manned by local members of a U.S.-allied group helping provide security in the village of Abu Lukah, near Musayyib, a Shiite-dominated town 40 miles south of Baghdad.

Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, commander of the 3rd Infantry Division that controls territory south of Baghdad, stressed the investigation was continuing but said initial results showed that U.S. troops fired on the checkpoint after spotting what appeared to be enemy forces planting roadside bombs.

"We are not looking to see who made a mistake but rather see what we can learn from that particular event," Lynch told The Associated Press Saturday during a whirlwind tour of patrol bases in the area.

Lynch said it's critical to "better coordinate between coalition forces, Iraqi security forces and concerned citizens," as he calls the vigilante-style groups that have sprouted up across the country to fight extremists.

The comments reflect rising concerns about possible friendly fire killings that could threaten to undermine the U.S. strategy of seeking alliances with local Sunni and Shiite leaders to fill the vacuum left by a national police force that has been plagued by corruption allegations and infiltration by militants.

Incidents of shooting of civilians at checkpoints has drawn allegations by many, in Iraq and beyond, that U.S. troops and contractors are quick to fire and ask question later.

Such criticism was widespread after the March 2005 fatal shooting of an Italian intelligence officer at a checkpoint near Baghdad airport. The officer was traveling at night shortly after securing the release of a kidnapped Italian reporter, who was wounded along with an Italian driver when a U.S. Soldier opened fire. The U.S. military has said the Soldier acted appropriately in the incident.

After the Abu Lukah shooting, the so-called North of Hillah Awakening Council staged a three-day strike to register its anger over the loss of three of its members, but guards resumed their posts on Sunday.

"Such acts will create a gap between us and the Americans. We are trying to restore security in the area while the Americans are killing us," Nabil Saleh, 37, said as he stood with his AK-47 slung over his shoulder at his post in Abu Lukah.

Jabar Hamid, a 33-year-old Shiite from the village, said the U.S. military had paid \$2,500 to each family of the three men killed.

"It is a tragedy and regrettable thing," he said.

In a bid to distinguish the recruits from potential militants, the groups have been given vests with reflective stripes, similar to those worn by traffic police in many countries. Others wear brown T-shirts with Iraqi hats similar to those worn by the national army.

Capt. John Newman, 31, of Columbus, Ga., said the Soldiers believe they can discern volunteers from the insurgents.

"We've given them their road guard vests," Newman said. "So, he'd better be wearing that vest if I see him carrying an AK-47."

Lynch stressed the Americans are not arming the groups because the men already have weapons, primarily AK-47s that are legally permitted in Iraqi households.

"We are allowing the people of Iraq to secure their own areas and they are using their personal firearms to do that," he said.

The southern belt of Baghdad is a mosaic of Sunni enclaves, such as Arab Jabour and Jisr Diyala, once al-Qaida havens, and all-Shiite strongholds, such as the town of Nahrawan. In that community, the country's strongest Shiite militia, the Mahdi Army, has lately been overshadowed by rogue Shiite elements and "gangs," as the U.S. military describes them.

Iraqi volunteers - both Sunnis and Shiites - mostly watch over their neighborhoods, guard mosques and man checkpoints. The theory is that, as natives to the area, they can better recognize foreign fighters and al-Qaida loyalists in their midst.

The tactic was first implemented in the Sunni western Anbar province, and later in Diyala, a province northeast of Baghdad.

Now it is being tested in Lynch's territory, such as the wind-swept planes surrounding U.S. patrol base Hawks, 20 miles southeast of Baghdad - one of 36 small bases Lynch's troops have built up as outposts in their region.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and other Shiite leaders have expressed concern over the American policy of sponsoring armed Sunnis, many of whom were likely former insurgents.

"Acceptance rules for these recruits should be within a legal framework so that we do not allow the emergence of new militias," al-Maliki said Friday during a meeting with the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Adm. Mike Mullen.

The U.S. military says the ultimate goal is to bring the volunteers into the Iraqi security forces, which the Americans hope will be eventually able to take over the country's security so they can go home.

Lynch insisted that every volunteer is nominated by tribal leaders and vetted by Americans with retina scans and fingerprinting. The serial numbers of their AK-47s also are logged.

"We know who they are, where they are," Lynch said, adding that his region now has more 20,000 Sunnis and Shiites who have come forward to join the alliances.

He said the formation of such groups has been a major factor in the success achieved since his troops arrived in April as part of President Bush's troop buildup. He cited a 64 percent reduction in attacks and a 60 percent drop in the number of local casualties, although he didn't give specific figures.

Lynch also acknowledged the volunteer groups could become a problem later if they are not brought into the mainstream.

"They want recognition," he said. "If they get a sense that they are not recognized or treated as legitimate, they could potentially go back to their rogue ways."

You-Tube Video Clip

My War Diary – Soldiers An eyewitness account of Insurgent Attack

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q--tv7As42U>

Tuesday conversation: Troy Polamalu

By Jason Cole, Yahoo! Sports

September 25, 2007

PITTSBURGH – Strong safety Troy Polamalu has become known around the Pittsburgh Steelers as the last guy out of the locker room on Sundays after home games. All of his teammates are long gone and even most of the equipment guys have cleared out by the time he emerges. Polamalu goes through a detailed process, including a dip in a cold tub and a lengthy shower to relax after a hard-hitting afternoon.

However, for a guy who doesn't seem to be in a hurry to leave, Polamalu does put a serious priority on his time away from the field with his wife, Theodora, the sister of Polamalu's former USC teammate Alex Holmes.

Polamalu took some time after Sunday's win over the San Francisco 49ers to engage in a Q&A with Yahoo! Sports.

Cole: Do you have a routine you follow on your day off?

Polamalu: We work out together because that's our only day off together. It's a pretty decent workout. She does a lot of running and I do a lot of stretching. Tuesday is also our only opportunity to go to church together, so we do that.

Cole: When and where do you go?

Polamalu: It starts at 8:30 (a.m.). ... It's the Nativity of the Theotokos monastery (in Saxonburg, Pa.).

Cole: I know you're devoutly Christian (Polamalu has a carefully arranged series of religious items in his locker at Heinz Field), but exactly which denomination?

Polamalu: Greek Orthodox. Theotokos literally means the Mother of God.

Cole: How long are you in services?

Polamalu: They usually go to about 12:30.

Cole: That's a four-hour service. Is that a normal service?

Polamalu: Pretty much, especially at a monastery.

Cole: Can you describe it?

Polamalu: What's really neat about the Orthodox church is that it's like walking back in time 2,000 years to the time of the Apostles, when they created these services. You walk into that and it's really like ... living it. They have maintained the truth ever since the beginning.

Cole: You're Polynesian. How did you end up at a Greek Orthodox church?

Polamalu: There are different ethnicities, like Russian Orthodox. My wife is Greek. I was a non-denomination Christian before we got married. So we sit around there and meet with our spiritual mother and then we go home, maybe take a nap, work out and then go home and have dinner.

Cole: Who's making dinner?

Polamalu: My wife; I cannot cook at all. I've tried. I'm terrible. When I cook, it's something nobody else would enjoy.

Cole: You only cook specialty things for yourself?

Polamalu: No, it's not that nobody else will make it for me, it's that I'm the only one who is going to enjoy it. I'll look at the other people and say, "Did you like it?" They say, "Noooooooooo."

Cole: Do you have any other hobbies or things you do away from the field? Maybe bowling?

Polamalu: No, not really. The single guys go bowl. The guys who are married go home, mostly. I really focus on spending time with my wife.

Cole: How hard is it to get time at home during the season? I know guys like (Miami Dolphins linebacker) Zach Thomas stay at the facility until very late studying film and (Indianapolis Colts quarterback) Peyton Manning is watching film at home.

Polamalu: First of all, I'm a Christian so my prayer life really comes first. Second of all, I'm a husband so my wife comes before anything else. If I have time to do anything else after that, I do it, but I don't sacrifice any time with her.

Cole: A lot of guys do it the other way around. Football comes first. They say family and faith come first, but they really do the football first. How do you reconcile it?

Polamalu: It's really easy for me. I love my faith and I know that's first. I really think I know what's important in my life and that's my faith and my wife.

Cole: So football is a really focused activity. There's no wasted time, right?

Polamalu: Actually, it's a lot of fun and it's something I enjoy. It's not like when I'm here it's business time and then there's family time. Football is, for me, it's something I do. It's like for you, you're a reporter. It's what you do, not who you are. Football does not define me. How I am with my faith and how I treat my wife is what truly defines you as a man. That is my goal in life to live that way and believe in it. It would be cowardly of me to say that I enjoy my time with my faith and my wife if I really didn't spend that time with them.

Cole: How long have you been married?

Polamalu: Two years now.

Cole: Kids?

Polamalu: God willing, someday. But three dogs counts for one kid, I think.

Cole: Um, no.

Polamalu: Three English bulldogs count for one kid.

Cole: No.

Polamalu:No?

Cole: I have two kids. No.

Polamalu: Come on, it has to count for one kid.

Cole: I respect and admire your beliefs and your stands on many things, but I'm not buying the three dogs-to-one kid ratio.

Polamalu: OK, you win this one.

Cole: Wait till you have a child waking up at 3 a.m., hungry and then he's got colic and he's screaming and you have no idea why.

Polamalu: (laughing) Yeah, it's probably like, "Talk to me, tell me what's wrong. Oh, that's right, you can't talk to me." Yeah, with the dogs it's if they pee in the house you say, "Go to the kennel."

Jason Cole is a national NFL writer for Yahoo! Sports. Send Jason a [question or comment](#) for potential use in a future column or webcast.