

## Saturday in the First Week: The Particular Examination

### *Summary of the Morrow's Meditation*

We will meditate tomorrow, first, upon the nature and importance of the particular examination; second, upon the manner of making it. We will then make the resolution: first, to be henceforth very faithful to this exercise; second, to make it according to the rules laid down by the teachers of the spiritual life. We will retain as our nosegay the words of Jeremiah: "*I have set thee this day to destroy and to build and to plant*" (Jer. 1:10).

### *Meditation for the Morning*

Let us adore Our Lord who, animated by a desire to render us perfect, teaches us, by means of masters of the spiritual life, the exercise of the particular examination as one of the most powerful means of salvation. Let us thank Him for this goodness, always attentive to what may be useful to the soul.

#### THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE PARTICULAR EXAMINATION

There is this difference between the general and the particular examination, that the first embraces the whole of the sins which we have committed during the day, or the space of time to which the examination is limited, whilst the particular examination has for its aim a special subject, for example, a vice, a virtue, an exercise, above all, the besetting sin, which is the weak side by which we are most exposed to lose our souls. This exercise is of great importance: first, because it is right first of all to provide for the safety of the part where our soul is most exposed to peril; now each man has in his soul a feeble side by which the devil principally attacks him, imitating therein the general who, in order to take a town, studies the weakest point and directs all his efforts to it; second, because our attention, disseminated over all our miseries at one and the same time, acts less efficaciously than when it concentrates its energies on one particular point; third, because the principal vice having been overcome, we shall easily conquer the others, in the same manner as an army which has lost its chief is easily put to rout. Let us here examine our conscience. Have we esteemed, as we ought to do, the particular examination, and do we make it assiduously every day? Do we bring to it all the attention necessary to search out and become acquainted with our least faults in regard to the matter which is the object of it? Do we not sometimes perform it with a great deal of negligence, because we do not appreciate all the importance of it? Do we not imagine that a minute research into our smallest failings would render us scrupulous, and that we can dispense ourselves from it?

#### THE MANNER OF MAKING THE PARTICULAR EXAMINATION

In order to do this well, we must: first, lay down the subject clearly, choosing the vice, the passion which is the most ordinary source of our temptations and our failings, or the virtue which is the most opposed to the vice; for example, humility for the proud, fraternal charity for those who are the most exposed to fail in it, mortification for too effeminate souls, gentleness and patience for the ill-tempered, chastity for tempted

souls, conformity to the will of God, the perfection of our ordinary actions, and other practices, according to the need of each person. Let us here examine ourselves. Have we a subject of particular examination which is well adapted to the needs of our souls? If we have not, let us fix upon one from today. Second, the subject once chosen, we must divide the parts and the relations of it, examine ourselves during a certain time, for example, on words contrary to humility, charity, or patience; later on, upon the acts which are contrary to these vices; later on still, upon the thoughts and sentiments contrary to them. Third, after having examined ourselves, we must set down in writing, or at least retain thoroughly in our memory, the number of failings, and impose upon ourselves a penance proportioned to the number of falls, for example, a trifling alms put in reserve somewhere; it will be, in addition to the good work, an easy means for becoming acquainted with our failings. Fourth, this examination being thus made beneath the eyes of God, in presence of Jesus Christ our judge, we must disavow our faults, ask pardon for them, make resolutions to preserve ourselves better from them in future, and pray to obtain the grace of our conversion. Is it thus that we daily make our particular examination?

*Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.*