

Wednesday in the Second Week: Holy Desires after Heaven

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

We will consider tomorrow in our meditation: first, that the mystery of the Transfiguration ought to kindle in us holy desires for heaven; second, that these holy desires are very useful to the soul. We will then make the resolution: first, to detach ourselves from the earth and no longer to love anything excepting heavenly things; second, often to give vent to holy desires in the form of ejaculatory prayers. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the words of St Bernard: "*How beautiful thou art, O my country, how beautiful!*"

Meditation for the Morning

Let us adore Jesus Christ, Our Lord, revealing the splendour of His glory upon Thabor, in order to detach us from the world and to make us desire heaven, by showing us how happy we shall be there (Matt. xvii:4). At this spectacle let us raise our hopes on high and let us conceive great desires in our heart for heaven. There is nothing more sanctifying.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD TEACHES US TO DESIRE HEAVEN

If, in fact, some rays of glory for one moment only have overwhelmed the apostles with so sweet a joy that Peter, being carried out of himself and overpowered with happiness, exclaimed: "*Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah*" (Matt. xvii:4)—what will it be, O Jesus, to see Thee face to face in all the splendour of Thy majesty, in all the brilliancy of Thy glory, and that, not for a few fleeting moments, as upon Thabor, but always, eternally! For eternally we shall contemplate the beauty of Thy face, eternally shall we enjoy Thy ravishing society, not merely in company with Moses and Elijah, but together with all the patriarchs, all the prophets, all the apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, and the virgins, not merely in a tabernacle, raised by the hand of man, but in the very city of God. O sweet and glorious hope! O ravishing destiny! It was that which consoled Job in all his sufferings. "*I know,*" he says, "*that my Redeemer liveth and in the last day I shall rise from out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God. This, my hope, is laid up in my bosom*" (Job xix:25–27). It was this that made the Apostle so ardently sigh for the dissolution of his body (Philipp. i:23), and inspired St Teresa with such longing desires to die: "*O life too long!*" she exclaimed; "*O death too tardy, how my exile is prolonged!*" It was this that made St Gregory of Nazianzen say: "*When I consider the great happiness which we gain in dying and the little we lose in parting with life, I can hardly contain the ardour of my desires; and I say to God: When, O Lord, wilt Thou take me away from earth and bring me to my home?*" (Greg. Naz., *Oral. x in Sacerd.*) Such ought to be the feelings of every Christian. For he, says St Augustine, will never rejoice in heaven as a citizen who does not sigh here below as an exile. The true Christian, he says elsewhere, suffers at being obliged to live and is delighted to die; life is a cross to him, death an enjoyment. Are these our dispositions? Do we not love exile more than our country, earth more than heaven; and do we not esteem it a happiness to be long exiled from Paradise and to enter into it as late as possible? Oh, what inconsequence is ours! We say to God, Thy kingdom come, and our captivity pleases

us, and we seek to establish ourselves in it as if we were to live here always. We are making our way towards happiness and we are in no haste to attain it; we are sinking in the midst of waves and we do not long for the port!

HOW USEFUL TO THE SOUL ARE HOLY DESIRES

First, they console it in all the trials of life and in all bodily infirmities. What, indeed, are all these trials to a soul kindled with holy desires for Paradise, where it hopes to receive a magnificent compensation? It says to itself, I suffer, it is true, but what is that compared with the happiness which awaits me, and the glory I shall enjoy when my body, transformed into the likeness of the body of my Saviour, shall be clothed with light as with a garment, shining with the splendour of the sun, impassible, immortal? Blessed be the suffering which will be the means of obtaining so much happiness for me! Second, holy desires for heaven detach from all temporary things; the soul which is filled with these great hopes sees that the whole world is infinitely below it; it henceforth aspires only to the eternal bliss of Paradise, and it says with St Ignatius: "*How vile the earth seems when I look at heaven!*" Third, these holy desires fill the soul with a holy ardour for salvation, and it says to itself, as did St Augustine, "If trials make me afraid, may the recompense for them encourage me." When we remember that the smallest trials endured in a Christian manner, the least act of virtue, the least sacrifice, the least prayer well performed, shall have as recompense an eternal weight of glory, there is naught which costs us anything, and we seize joyfully upon all that tends to our salvation. Oh, of how many graces do we deprive ourselves by this forgetfulness of heaven which is so habitual to us! Let us acknowledge it and raise our hearts to heaven. *Sursum corda.*

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.