

Wednesday in the Third Week: The Offence Committed against God by Sin

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

As contrition, in order to be valid, ought to be based upon motives of faith, as we saw in our last meditation, we will meditate tomorrow on the first of these motives, and we shall see: first, how sin, being an offence against God, is an evil which merits tears; second, how greatly the circumstances in which the sinner commits it renders it still more horrible. We will then make the resolution: first, to be thoroughly penetrated before we present ourselves at the holy tribunal with this great motive of contrition; second, to recall it to our selves every day, in the morning and in the evening, in order to excite in us horror for sin. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the words of the prodigal son: "*Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee; I am not worthy to be called Thy son*" (Luke xv:18–19).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us adore Our Lord Jesus Christ prostrate on His knees before the majesty of His Father (Luke xxii:41). In this humble posture He asks of Him pardon for the outrages committed against Him by sin; He offers reparation for them, and consents to bear their penalty. Let us unite our selves with the sentiments of His afflicted heart, and ask of Him a share in these holy dispositions.

HOW SIN, INASMUCH AS IT IS AN OFFENCE AGAINST GOD, IS WORTHY OF ALL OUR TEARS

Alas! my God, if I had only failed in matters of pure counsels, it would have been enough to merit all my tears; for is it not a very deplorable irreverence when Thou sayest: "Do this, it will be more agreeable to Me; do not do that, thou wilt displease Me," to have the impudence not to yield to the authority of Thy desires, and only to obey when Thou hast the rod in Thy hand, like a vile slave who obeys only when he hears a voice menacing him, or like a false friend, who does not respect the desires of his friend, and is not afraid of displeasing him. The impudence is much more shameful still, O my God, when, passing from counsels to orders, Thou sayest: "Do this, I command thee; do not do that, I forbid thee; if thou dost not obey, the fires of purgatory will execute justice on thy rebellious will." And yet I have the audacity that do what Thou forbiddest, and to omit what Thou commandest. What, Lord! I, a vile creature, a worm of the earth, whom Thou mightest annihilate at a glance, and whom Thou dost preserve through pure mercy—I disobey Thee—I who desire that all should bend to my will, and am angry if my servants do not promptly execute my slightest orders! I disobey Thee to Thy face; whilst seeing, through faith, the majesty of Thy eyes fixed upon me, I do, before Thy eyes, what often I would not do before the eyes of a servant, and that not once, but thousands of times, and daily! Is not that a fault which calls for all the tears I can shed? And yet that is only venial sin. What, then, O my God, is mortal sin? Ah, if I had committed but one in my whole life it would have been enough to make me pass all the rest of my life in shedding contrite tears. At least, in venial

sin I did not entirely renounce Thy friendship; I did not exchange my right to heaven for hell; but I see that mortal sin makes me break entirely with Thee, incur Thy hatred, make myself a butt for Thy great anger, and yet I hold it all of no account! If I thought that in sinning I should displease the world as much as Thee; that I should inflict an injury upon my honour, my fortune, my pleasures, as well as my innocence, I should take good care not to commit it; but because, in sinning, I offend only Thee, and that it is only Thy friendship I lose, I allow myself to sin! Pardon me, O Lord, for showing Thee such contempt. I see Thee displaying before me, if I sin, all the power of Thy vengeance, all the eternity of Thy chastisements, and yet I sin, in spite of Thy threats! I see that Thou askest of me only what is infinitely just, which my conscience dictates to me and my reason approves, and I despise Thy orders, in spite of my reason and in spite of my conscience! I put in the balance against Thee a passing gratification, a soiled and tainted pleasure, which enters into the soul only in order to take with it unhappiness and remorse; and yet, in this alternative, passion gets the upper hand; dirt is preferred to Thee! O crime! O subversion! O abyss of iniquity! Pardon, Lord, mercy!

HOW THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE SINNER OFFENDS GOD RENDER HIS FAITH STILL MORE HORRIBLE

First, there is the treachery of it. Because, at my baptism and in my many confessions and communions, I made an oath of fidelity to Thee, O my God, and behold, after having taken upon me so many engagements, I have, nevertheless, been unfaithful to Thee! O faith of treaties, where art thou? O violated oaths! O chief of felonies! O disloyal Christian! O traitor and perjurer! Second, there is the ingratitude of it. Jesus Christ died for me; He has given Himself to me in the sacraments; He has pursued me with His graces, and His love has surrounded me day and night with His natural and supernatural graces; and I, who am overwhelmed with His favours, I have turned against Him; I have employed His own gifts, my intelligence, my will, my senses, in offending against Him! O horrible ingratitude! Third, there is in it the rebellion of the subject against his sovereign; of the son against the best of fathers; of the friend against the most faithful of friends; of the creature against the Creator; of weakness against omnipotence; of littleness against infinite greatness! There is in it even more than all this; there is the crime of high treason against the divine Majesty; there is in a certain way a double deicide: the first, in that my sins, the cause of the death of Jesus Christ, are as the executioners who nailed Him to the cross by a crime worse than that of the Jews, who would not have crucified the Saviour had they known Him; and yet I, who knew Him, have crucified Him! The second deicide consists in the sinner desiring that God should not know his sin; and supposing that He knows it, he desires that God should not detest it; and supposing that He detests it, he desires that God should not punish it. Now, to desire all this is to desire that God should be deprived either of His knowledge or of His holiness or of His power. It is, consequently, to desire that God should not be God. What a horror! Oh, how hateful, then, is sin! and what a firm resolution we ought to make to avoid it a thousand times more than the greatest evils which could happen to us!

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.