

Tuesday in the Fourth Week: A Firm Resolve

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

We will meditate tomorrow upon the firm resolution which forms the essential character of contrition; and we shall see: first, what is the nature and the absolute necessity of it; second, what are its characteristics. We will then make the resolution: first, to avoid carefully all occasions of sin; second, not to neglect any means of becoming better, whatever sacrifice it may cost us, or whatever violence we must do ourselves; and we will retain as our spiritual nosegay the words of the Psalmist: "*I have sworn, and am determined, to keep the judgments of Thy justice*" (Ps. CXVIII:106).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us adore the Spirit of God inspiring the saints of the Old and the New Testament with a firm resolution, as energetic as it was constant, to lead a perfect life. David exclaims: I have sworn to hate sin; I hold it in abomination. I have said it; I am resolved. The right hand of the Most High has worked this change in me (Ps. CXVIII:163; Ps. LXXVI:11). St Peter allows two inexhaustible fountains of tears to flow from his eyes, and makes amends for his faults by a life devoted to God; Magdalene changes her profane fires into a furnace of love; the martyrs take with them to the scaffold a firm resolution not to betray their faith; St Ignatius and St Francis Xavier renounce the world and its glory in order to give themselves wholly to the care of their own salvation. Let us praise the Holy Spirit who caused these great souls to make such sublime resolutions, and let us, with this object in view, render Him all our homage.

THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF A FIRM RESOLUTION

A firm resolution, very different from those feeble wishes of which hell is full, of those sterile desires which leave us always in the same state, is an energetic determination, a decided resolution to change our life, at no matter what cost; to be henceforth solidly virtuous, however disagreeable it may be to us; to do ourselves great violence, and to immolate many of our repugnances. The soul, after having made this firm resolution, does not say, I should be very glad never again to fall, but it says energetically, I will not; it is my decision; and if I could begin again, I would rather lose all and suffer all things than to commit the fault of which I have been guilty. It is, lastly, a determination like that which a worldly man makes, not to do such or such a thing which would compromise his fortune, his honour, his liberty, his life. A firm resolution, understood in this manner, is inherent to contrition, and is part of it, because regret for the past necessarily makes the will determine to act in an opposite manner. The motives of the one are essentially the motives of the other; so that without a firm resolution there cannot be true contrition, and consequently neither sacrament nor justification. God will not remit sin excepting in proportion as we are resolved not to fall into it again, and it would be committing a fresh offence against Him to say, I accuse myself and I repent, when in the bottom of our hearts we have an inclination to renew our fault if the occasion should present itself, says Lactantius. Let us here examine ourselves as to how many confessions we have made during our lives without any serious resolution, without any fixed determination to correct ourselves, or else should we be still what we are?

CHARACTERISTICS AND SIGNS OF A FIRM RESOLUTION

A firm resolution ought, like contrition, to be: first, universal; that is to say, to extend to all sins, at least to mortal ones, without exception. With God it is all or nothing (James 11:10); but it ought to apply, above all, to habitual faults; that is to say, to the faults for which the heart has an affection, which makes it fall easily and without great resistance, which even leads it to seek occasions for it. Therein lies the true peril of the soul; the weak side of the place we have to defend against the devil. There, consequently, ought we principally to bring our firm resolution to bear. Second, a firm resolution ought to be supreme; that is to say, it ought to be superior to all attachments to the extent of breaking them off, to all difficulties up to the point of conquering them, if the service of God requires us to do so. God ought to take the first place; it is His right. Third, a firm resolution ought to be practical; that is to say, it ought to descend from a general resolution to the means of attaining the end we propose to ourselves. The first means is prayer, that channel of grace without which we can do nothing; the second is vigilance over what we say or do, or what we hear or see, over our thoughts, our intentions, our most frequent faults, above all, our ruling passion; and this vigilance ought to have in view, as its principal object, the separating ourselves from all occasions of sin and of punishing ourselves after each fall. The third means is mortification, which alone can bring back our evil nature beneath the rule of order, enable it to maintain recollection, and make passion die by refusing it that which flatters it. Fourth, a firm resolution ought to be persevering. It amounts to nothing to will to do what is right during a certain time; we must will to do it always. He who refuses to God a single moment of his life cannot please Him (St Prosper), unless he return to Him. Let us examine whether our firm resolution has these four characteristics.

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.