

## Saturday after Septuagesima: The Small Number of the Elect

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

We will meditate tomorrow on the last word of the gospel of last Sunday: "*Many are called, but few are chosen;*" and we will consider: first, why there are so few of the elect; second, what we have to do in order to belong to this small number. We will then make the resolution: first, never to allow ourselves to be influenced by the example of the majority, but, on the contrary, to ask ourselves what the saints would have done in similar circumstances, what they would have said, what they would have thought, and thereby to rule our own conduct; second, to lay to heart the affair of our sanctification, and to pursue it with this sentiment in our heart: I will be a saint. We will retain as our spiritual nosegay the words of the gospel, "*Many are called, but few are chosen.*"

### *Meditation for the Morning*

Let us adore Our Saviour pronouncing those terrible words, "*Many are called, but few are chosen.*" Let us admire the sentiments of His heart at that thought—He who so loves men that He desires to save them all; and the prospect of so many souls who will abuse His mission, His passion, and His death, His sacraments, and all the means of salvation which He destines for them, all these things cut Him to the heart so as to make Him cry out in the Garden of Olives: "*My soul is sorrowful even unto death*" (Matt. xxvi:38). Let us thank Him for the love He bears us, and let us promise to console Him by living the life of the elect.

### WHY THERE ARE SO FEW OF THE ELECT

If there are so few of the elect it is not owing to God, it is owing to man; it is because: first, the majority do not think seriously of their salvation, and are determined not to think of it. To think of earthly things, well and good, it pleases them; but to think of what they will become when they leave this life, that is just what they cannot bear even to be made to think of. Similar to the labourers in our gospel, instead of working in the precious vineyard, the culture of which is confided to them, that is to say, their souls, they lose time in going from place to place; in talking about trifles and things that are taking place; they occupy themselves with nothing but earthly affairs, and they do not know how to raise their eyes to heaven. In order that they should be saved, it would be necessary that God should save them without their concurrence. Now St Augustine has said: God, who created us without our aid, will not save us without our concurrence. Second, there are few of the elect, because many, even though they may think of it, dare not resolve for good and all to lead the life which saves. Cowardice stops them, holiness frightens them, the holiness which is so beautiful, which is the secret of happiness upon earth as it is in heaven. They limit themselves to saying; I would wish to be a saint, the elect of God, with the mental reservation that it will not cost me any sacrifice. They never say resolutely: It is decided, it is a fixed determination on my part. I will be a saint, and I shall be. With them it is but a feeble, cowardly will possessing no energy; one of those powerless and sterile desires of which hell is full, one of those half-wills of the idle who are killed by desires (Ps. xxi:25), who will and will not, who say to themselves: "*There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets*" (Prov. xxii:13); he will devour me. Now

it is not thus that we save ourselves. In order to succeed, we must fix this project firmly in our head, take it to heart, pursue it diligently, saying to ourselves and often repeating it: I will be saved, I will, whatever it may cost me; I will, whatever may be said and whatever may be thought of me. Let us examine ourselves by these signs as to whether we are of the number of the elect.

#### WHAT WE HAVE TO DO IN ORDER TO BE OF THE NUMBER OF THE ELECT

First, we must avoid the wide road in which the majority walk, and follow the narrow way where but few are found. For since it is the majority who are lost, we cannot hope to save ourselves in living like the majority, but rather in living like the few; that is to say, in not allowing ourselves to be carried away by the habits and customs of the world, and never losing sight of the fact that even amongst Catholics there are but few Christians, whether in the town or in the country. Second, we must always have present to our mind the signs by which the wide road is distinguished from the narrow, in order not to confound the one with the other. In practice, the wide road is recognised by this sign, that men will not put themselves out of their way, but will live at ease and without constraint; consequently they think that it is sufficient to avoid gross vices and not to do harm to anyone. They do not in the least aspire to be saints, but leave others to do so; it is enough to live as do the common herd. They do the least which is possible for their salvation, choosing in religion just what pleases them and leaving the remainder on one side. They certainly propose to live better later on, but the moment never arrives. The narrow way, on the contrary, is recognised by these signs, that men fight therein against their inclinations and their passions, above all against their besetting sin; that they perform their duty, cost what it may; that they renounce themselves; that they mortify themselves; that they bear their cross; that they watch over their hearts and over their senses. That seems hard, but the practice is full of sweetness. Third, we must labour for our salvation with courage and confidence. Why should I not do what so many others have done before me? The man who has a resolute will can do everything with the help of grace, which is never refused to him who asks for it. The soldier to fulfil his duty, the merchant to make his fortune, the labourer to gain his livelihood, impose many more cares and sacrifices upon themselves than are demanded by religion. That the man can be saved who wills to be, is an article of faith. Let us examine ourselves upon these principles as to the way in which we walk. Are we not content to live like the great majority, to follow our own ease without constraint, to take in religion just what pleases us, to leave the rest on one side? Do we aspire to imitate the saints and the little number of the elect?

*Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.*