

Thursday after Sexagesima: The Means of Profiting by the Word of God

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

We will meditate tomorrow on the means for profiting by the word of God, and we shall see: first, that we must listen to it with faith; second, we must make the application of it to ourselves; third, we must deduce practical resolutions from it. We will then make the resolution: first, at each instruction or at each reading to represent to ourselves God Himself who instructs us and to apply what He says to ourselves; second, to draw from each instruction or reading practical resolutions for the reformation of our life. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the advice of St James: "*Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only: deceiving your own selves*" (James 1:22).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us adore Our Saviour Jesus Christ teaching His apostles the science of salvation; let us admire the faith and silence with which they listened to their adorable Master, and how they applied to themselves the words He said and put them in practice. Let us ask for a share in their dispositions and their graces, in order that we may rightly profit by the word of God.

WE MUST LISTEN WITH FAITH TO THE WORD OF GOD

Too often we listen to the divine word as though it were the word of man, as though it were a secular discourse, through curiosity, to appreciate the merit of it, or with carelessness as though it were something indifferent. This is an error which results in fatal consequences. At the sound of this holy word we must say to ourselves: It is not a man, it is God who speaks to me, the same God who will one day be my Judge. The day will come when He will ask an account from me of all that I hear. His word never returns to Him empty; it either bears fruits of benediction, if we profit by it, or fruits of condemnation, if we leave it sterile. It is God who speaks to me, God with His sovereign authority. I ought then to listen to Him religiously, with perfect docility of mind and of heart, without permitting myself to find anything in it to censure, without prejudice, or rather sacrificing to it all my prejudices, if anything of the kind should present itself to my mind. It is God who speaks to me, and who speaks to me for my good, to teach me the way to heaven and urge me to walk in it (Luke 1:77). I ought, therefore, to listen with this design in view: to seek nothing in the divine word but the means of becoming better, and to pray to God to enlighten me, to touch me, to make me put in practice His holy counsels (I Sam. 111:9). Is it thus that I listen to the word of God? Do I see in him who announces it to me the God whom he represents, without paying attention to what is human in him, his style, his gestures, his voice, the whole of his exterior? Do I listen to him as though God Himself were there and had come down from heaven to instruct me?

WE MUST APPLY THE WORD OF GOD TO OURSELVES

The word which we do not apply to ourselves is like the arrow which flies above the head of the enemy without touching him; it is the seed carried away by the wind, which, not sinking into the earth, cannot germinate there, or produce fruit. This is why so many sermons and readings have been useless to me. I have said to myself: "This applies excellently well to such and such a person," and scarcely ever have I said to myself: "This applies exactly to me. This is indeed the faithful portrait of my conscience, of my character, of the state of my soul." If, instead of reasoning thus, I had, seriously reflecting upon myself, opened the door of my heart to the divine word, it would have revealed to me, through the many foldings of my soul, hidden passions, secret attachments, and the voluntary imperfections which exist in me. For the word of God, says St Paul, is living and efficacious; more penetrating than a two-edged sword, it pierces the very marrow of the heart, dividing the soul and spirit, that it may discern its hidden miseries (Heb. iv:12). Let us examine whether we are faithful in applying to ourselves the lessons that we hear and our readings of the holy word.

FROM ALL THE INSTRUCTIONS WE RECEIVE WE MUST DRAW PRACTICAL LESSONS TENDING TO THE REFORMATION OF OUR LIFE

"*Be ye doers of the word*" says St James, "*and not hearers only: deceiving your own selves*" (James I:22); it would be to imitate the man who looks for a moment at his face in a faithful mirror, then goes away and forgets it (Ibid. 24). Of what use is it to see our miseries in the faithful mirror of the divine word, if, forgetting what we have seen, we do nothing to correct ourselves and take no resolution tended to render us better? We profit by the divine word only so far as we have patience to reform ourselves and to conquer ourselves, like those of whom it is said that they bring forth fruit by dint of patience (Luke VIII:15). Can that be said of us? Let us examine our conscience and correct ourselves.

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.