

## Monday after Sexagesima: Obstacles to the Word of God

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

We will meditate tomorrow upon three obstacles which prevent the word of God from producing fruit in the soul. Our Lord has pointed them out to us in the three kinds of ground where the seed falls. The first obstacle is worldliness, figured by the beaten road, open to all passers-by; the second is cowardice, figured by the inert, stony ground, which does not allow vegetation to take root; the third is attachments, figured by the stones which cover the earth. We will then make the resolution: first, throughout the day to preserve a spirit of more than ordinary recollection, in order to profit by the good sentiments which the Spirit of God may suggest to us; second, not to refuse any sacrifice to grace. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the words of the Apostle: "*The earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God; but that which bringeth forth thorns and briars is reprobate, and very near unto a curse*" (Heb. VI:7-8).

### *Meditation for the Morning*

Let us render to Jesus Christ our homage of adoration, of praise, and of thanksgiving for His goodness in pointing out the obstacles calculated to render His divine word sterile in us. Oh, how precious is this lesson! May we understand it well, and profit abundantly by it.

#### THE FIRST OBSTACLE TO THE WORD OF GOD IS WORLDLINESS

The soul which is worldly is indeed the beaten road, open to all passers-by, where all the world comes and goes, passes and repasses, treading under foot the divine seed which is afterwards devoured by the birds of heaven (Luke VIII:5). Traversed in every direction by a thousand vain and useless thoughts, full of the world and its affairs, but empty of the interior spirit of recollection and union with God, the poor soul is always occupied with what is passing around it, and hardly ever occupied with itself. The past, the present, the future, all absorb it; and in this deplorable state there is no means of preventing the divine seed from being on the one side trodden under foot by all the vain thoughts which ceaselessly pass and repass, and on the other from being carried away by the birds of heaven, that is to say, the vain imaginations which also traverse the atmosphere. Such a soul may still make laudable resolutions to pray, to read spiritual books, and that will be the word of God ready to take root; but it will not watch over itself; ideas from without will arrive and will cast themselves upon the seed; it will be recollected no longer, worldliness will soon have ruined everything. Is not this our history?

#### THE SECOND OBSTACLE TO THE WORD OF GOD IS COWARDICE

Another portion of the seed, said Jesus Christ, falls upon stony ground, germinates at first without difficulty, but meeting with stones, dries up and dies (Luke VIII:6). By this is meant, said the Saviour, those who receive the divine word without repugnance and even with joy, who love to hear about God and religion, to read

pious books, but who on being exposed to the trial of a sacrifice or of a difficulty lose courage and withdraw (Ibid. 13). Cowardice in the service of God, this then is the stone which is at the bottom of the heart, which dries up the divine grain, and prevents it from growing. As long as there is no sacrifice to make, all is well, the grain germinates and springs up in good sentiments and holy affections; but as soon as a difficulty to be surmounted presents itself, a temptation to be vanquished, a sacrifice to be made, there is a stoppage. The stone is there: it is cowardice; the seed cannot penetrate it, it dries up and dies. The soul desires to love God, but on condition that it costs nothing; it desires indeed to be saved, but without doing any violence to itself. It admires the saints, but without imitating them; it has not the courage to do so; the stone is there: it is cowardice. It reads indeed in the gospel that it must renounce itself and take up the cross; but these words hardly touch its surface, and it does neither less nor more, because the stone is below, which hinders them from sinking into it: it is cowardice. Oh, who will remove this stone (Mark XVI:3) that the new man may come forth and that the word may fructify.

### THE THIRD OBSTACLE TO THE WORD OF GOD IS ATTACHMENTS

This is what Jesus Christ points out to us by the thorns and briars which stifle the seed (Luke VIII:7). The earth is good in itself, for the abundance of briars proves the fertility of the soil; there is a certain amount of courage and energy in the soul; it welcomes the virtues recommended by the divine word and decides to practise them; but in the midst of these good resolutions it allows to grow and be rooted in it certain attachments which it will not break off; attachments to a comfortable and sensual life, to pleasure, to money, to glory, to reputation, to its own will, to its character, to its own opinion and its own views. All these attachments grow and are developed, they cover the good resolutions which have been made, stifle them in the bud, and thus render the divine word sterile at the very moment when it was about to form itself into ears of corn. Is not this our history?

*Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.*