

Saturday in the Fourth Week: On Direction

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

We will meditate tomorrow as a supplement to our meditations upon the Sacrament of Penance: first, on the obligation of allowing ourselves to be guided by our confessor; second, on the manner in which this direction ought to consist. We will then make the resolution: first, to take counsel with our confessor respecting our rule of life and the employment of our time, the reformation of our defects, the practice of virtues, and the kind of good works for which we are best suited, if we are in a position to perform them; second, to consult our confessor in the difficulties and doubts we may meet with. We will retain as our spiritual nosegay the words of the Holy Spirit: "*Seek counsel always of a wise man*" (Tob. IV:19).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us adore Our Lord Jesus Christ as regards the manner in which He guided St Paul after his conversion; that great apostle aspired to nothing else excepting to know and fulfil the will of God (Acts IX:6). Our Lord, instead of enlightening him Himself, or leaving him to his own guidance, in the state of supernatural light which surrounded him, sends him to a wise director (Ibid. 7). Let us thank Him for this beautiful lesson, which teaches us not to lean upon our own prudence (Prov. III:5), and always to take the advice of a wise man (Tob. IV:19).

THE OBLIGATION OF ALLOWING OURSELVES TO BE GUIDED BY OUR CONFESSOR

"No one is sufficient to himself so that he can lead himself" (St. Basil, *Orat. de Felic.*). Our reason deceives us; the wisest lose themselves when, instead of taking counsel, they trust in their own lights, says St Bernard (*Ep.*, LXXXII). He who sees in his confessor only a confidant of his sins in order to receive absolution of them, and not a counsellor to direct him in the road of life, is as much exposed to lose his soul as is a ship without a pilot, a blind man without a guide, a sick man without a doctor; and the devil knows no surer way of making Christians lose their souls than by inspiring them with the presumptuous opinion that they can govern themselves by their own sole judgment (St Dorotheus, *Doct.* 5). Therefore all the saints have been faithful to the practice of taking counsel respecting their own conduct (St Vincent Ferrer, *De Vita Spirit.*). Moses takes counsel of the ancients; David is reproved by Nathan and Gad, who are not such great prophets as he is; Saul is sent to Ananias by Jesus Christ, who could have instructed him; lastly, the Saviour Himself listened to and questioned simple men (Luke II:46). It is in the order of Providence that men should be instructed by other men and should depend upon one another for guidance; it is also in the order of reason: he who sees clearly into the conscience of another does not see clearly into his own, he deludes himself in respect to his obligations, his vices and his virtues, his merits and his aptitudes; and all have need of a wise counsellor who studies them without prejudice and with the grace of his ministry. It was this which made Bourdaloue, when he was preaching in Paris, utter these remarkable words: "I cannot sufficiently deplore the blindness of people living in the world who desire to have confessors and not directors, as though the one

could be separated from the other” (Sermon for the thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost). Let us here examine ourselves. Are we not of the number of those who would have made the holy preacher sigh?

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE DIRECTION OUGHT TO BE PERFORMED

First, we must see in our director, not a man or a sage, but an angel, clothed with the wisdom of God, a Jesus Christ, nay, even a God, like the holy solitary who said (John Clim., *Grad.* 4): “I see the image of Jesus Christ in my superior.” We must speak to him, consequently, with entire openness of heart, and with perfect confidence, as to a charitable physician and the faithful friend whom God has given us for our guidance; reveal to him all the good and all the evil of which we are aware in ourselves, our inclinations, our intentions, our temptations, without reserve, without disguise, without any of those artifices of which self-love sometimes makes use in order to make the will of our director harmonise with our desires; we ought to put on one side all human respect, all shame, all repugnance, as well as all feelings of vanity or curiosity. Second, we must listen to his counsels with respect and confidence, and follow them with fidelity and exactness, however contrary they may be to our own judgment, our character, and our will. Third, we must abandon ourselves so entirely to his guidance in all things that have relation to our salvation, that we shall never undertake anything without first consulting him about it; that we never refuse to do what he tells us, that we give him an absolute and entire liberty to tell us what he thinks; that we never discuss his counsels, but embrace them as being the best; if we have doubts, that we expose them with as much indifference as freedom, and that, whether he says one thing or another, we are equally obedient to him. Are these our dispositions and our manner of acting?

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.