

Monday in the Fourth Week: The Evil Sin Causes us

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

We will tomorrow resume our meditation upon the motives for contrition, and we shall see: first, the ill that venial sin does us; second, the still, greater evil that mortal sin occasions us. We will then make the resolution: first, to hold in horror our slightest faults, and to keep ourselves in a very humble state before God for having committed any during the course of our life; second, to fly from them as from a pestilence, from the least occasion of sin, to mistrust ourselves, to watch and pray never again to fall into them. We will retain as our spiritual nosegay the words of the publican: "*O God, be merciful to me, a sinner*" (Luke XVIII:13).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us adore Our Lord Jesus Christ covered with wounds and nailed to the cross for our sins. Our crimes are His executioners, and we are His murderers. O God, my victim, I adore and I love Thee. I deplore my pride, which has crowned Thee with thorns, my effeminacy, which has torn Thy limbs, my love of independence, which has nailed Thee to the cross. O divine crucified Jesus, form within my heart the hatred of sin, of that evil which is so great that it could be repaired only by Thy death, and make me to understand the evils which it causes myself.

THE EVILS WHICH VENIAL SIN CAUSES US

It would be impossible to express what all the evils are which venial sin causes us. In the next life, if it be not expiated, it will retard the joys of paradise perhaps during long years, and will cost us terrible chastisement. Even after it has been expiated, it will deprive us throughout eternity of the degree of glory and happiness to which an act of the contrary virtue would have elevated us. In this life it cools the friendship of God and diminishes His graces, those graces, nevertheless, so necessary to our weakness; it diminishes our faith and our appreciation of eternal truths; it takes from our soul the tender love of piety, the joys of the Holy Spirit, the delights of innocence; it enfeebles the will, it moulds it little by little to evil, it stifles remorse, dissipates watchfulness, and thence leads to great falls, which are always the consequence of relaxation. Lastly, when it is converted into a habit, it reduces the soul to a state worse than death: to lukewarmness (Rev. III:16). For this frightful state has for its fundamental character the habit of venial faults.

Therefore St Teresa tells us that God one day caused her to see the place she would have occupied in hell if she had yielded to a temptation of vanity. O my God, how terrible then is venial sin! And yet I fear it so little, I commit it so easily! O my Lord, inspire me with an everlasting horror for it!

THE EVILS MORTAL SIN OCCASIONS US

First, it takes from us the friendship of God and leaves us a prey to His hatred. Before the fall we were the cherished children of God, His temple, and the objects of His complaisance. We raised to heaven eyes full of confidence, and we saw there a father whose thoughts were full of nothing but love and goodness towards

us. But after having committed sin, how great was the change, and what unhappiness was ours! Slaves and the haunt of the devil, children of wrath, and objects of malediction, there is no longer for us anything in heaven, if we are not converted, but a severe judge whose thunder threatens us. Alas! little though we may reflect upon it, how unhappy we are under the weight of the thought, I have incurred the hatred of God! Second, sin takes from us peace of heart and leaves us remorse. Whilst we were innocent, we were happy; calm reigned within us, and a sweet and amiable piety reflected outwardly the happiness of a pure heart. But with sin peace disappeared, and gave up its place to distress, to remorse, to anxiety, to the agitation of the conscience, which turns in all directions and everywhere finds nothing but unhappiness. For, O Lord, Thou hast made us for Thee, and outside Thee is neither peace nor happiness. Third, sin takes from us all our merits and leaves us naked and indigent. If a man had lived sixty centuries, and at each moment had merited as much as all the saints taken together, a single mortal sin destroys everything, takes from the soul all its merits (Lam. 1:10), and renders it incapable of meriting anything fresh as long as it remains under its empire. Fourth, sin takes from us heaven and leaves us hell. As long as we are in a state of sin, we can no longer aspire either to the beautiful thrones on which we ought to be seated, or to the crowns which ought to encircle our foreheads, or to the enchanting society of the angels and saints, of Mary, of the holy humanity of Jesus Christ, or to the possession of God. The only portion which remains to us is hell. Devils present themselves before God, asking of Him permission to cast the sinners into it (Matt. xxii:28). What a position, great God! I am only one step removed from hell! Is it not for me that the thunder rumbles? Oh, how foolhardy and imprudent I am! Pardon, my God, mercy! I deplore my sin, I detest it with my whole soul!

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.