

## Monday in the First Week: The Three Temptations of Jesus in the Desert

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

We will meditate tomorrow upon the three temptations of Jesus in the desert, that is to say: first, an excessive care of the body and of health: second, the self-love which presumes upon itself and desires to attract notice; third, ambition and self-seeking. We will then make the resolution: first, to avoid excessive delicacy in the care of our body; second, to seek God only in all things. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the advice of the apostle St James: "*Resist the devil and he will fly from you*" (James IV:7).

### *Meditation for the Morning*

Let us adore Jesus Christ in the desert allowing Himself to be tempted by the devil, in order to teach us how to act in similar temptations. Let us bless this charitable High-Priest, who was willing to be tried by all kinds of temptations that He might resemble us in all things except sin, and let us put all our confidence in Him (Heb. IV:15).

#### FIRST TEMPTATION: AN EXCESSIVE CARE OF THE BODY AND OF HEALTH

The devil draws near to Jesus, and says to Him, why dost Thou not eat? Thy body will not be able to bear it. Why dost Thou not tell these stones to change themselves into bread? (Matt. IV:3) Man does not live by bread alone, Jesus Christ answers, one word issuing from the mouth of God suffices to make him live. I have given to the Lord My life, My strength, My health; it is His property, He will take care of it; I abandon Myself to His providence. What a lesson for us is contained in these words of the Saviour, and He confirms them by His example. He lives during forty days in the desert, in a savage place, exposed upon a mountain to all the inclemencies of the weather; He fasts there during the whole of that time without tasting either bread or water; He watches during a great part of the night; and when He reposes, it is either upon a rock or upon the bare ground. He does not mean to tell us thereby to treat our own bodies with such severity, for it would try them too much. Health is a gift He has made us, and which He forbids us to deteriorate by excesses of any kind; but apart from this precaution, He interdicts us all sensual delicacies as regards our food, our clothing, our beds, and our lodging; He wishes that we should always feel that we are well placed where God wills we should be; and like St Francis de Sales to go so far as to say, I am never better than when I am not well. He wills also that, following the example of St Paul, we should not refuse to chastise our bodies and reduce them to servitude, whether for the purpose of expiating our past sins, or to prevent backsliding, or to appease the anger of God. Are these our dispositions?

#### SECOND TEMPTATION: SELF-LOVE PRESUMPTUOUS AND JEALOUS TO ATTRACT NOTICE

The devil transports Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple, that He may be seen there by the whole world, and proposes to Him to cast Himself down from there, so that if He falls without injuring Himself He should

be filled with a vain complaisance. Jesus Christ, repelling the temptation, renders Himself invisible to all the people, and returns by Himself to His beloved solitude. It is a beautiful example, which teaches us that, instead of wishing to attract observation and to show ourselves off in the presence of others, we ought: first, to show ourselves only through necessity, and always to tend to avoid esteem and praise, to be unknown and hidden; second, to keep ourselves on our guard against presumption, which esteems itself to be worthy of being honoured, and thinks itself capable of bearing honours without ruining itself through pride. Let us here enter into ourselves and judge ourselves.

### THIRD TEMPTATION: AMBITION AND SELF-INTEREST

From the summit of a high mountain the devil places before the eyes of Jesus Christ all the kingdoms of the world, with their riches and their glory. I will give it all to Thee, he says, if Thou wilt prostrate Thyself before me and adore me. *Get thee behind Me, tempter*, answers Jesus Christ; *it is written: Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve* (Luke IV:5). Thus ought every Christian soul to act. It ought to hold in horror all baseness, all intrigues, all insinuations tending to obtain the good graces of those who can obtain for it a good position, or enable it to rise to high places, or to maintain itself therein. It does not allow itself to be seduced by the bait of honours, and it cannot bend its knees to those who are the dispensers of them. It says, like the Apostle: *“To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you or by man’s day; but neither do I judge my own self”* (I Cor. IV:3); in all things I think of nothing but my duty. If I please God, that suffices me, and all the rest is as nothing to me. O happy liberty! O holy freedom of a soul which has such dispositions! Let us examine ourselves before God as to whether these are our own dispositions.

*Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.*