

this is one of the greatest signs you can have that God is particularly concerned about your salvation, because he gives you the opportunity to fight and to practice virtue energetically and in this way to gain strength by it. Little by little, we acquire sublime virtue when we remain constant, unshaken, and inflexible in its practice in spite of the violent temptations that attack us.

So, consider it a great misfortune when you are not tempted. This is a sign of reprobation and of God's abandonment, for God exercises those he loves⁵ and is pleased when he sees them tempted, as was the case with Job and Tobias, two of his most faithful servants.

1. Mt 4:1
2. Sir 2:1

3. Jb 7:1
4. Tb 12:13

5. Rv 3:19

Second Sunday of Lent

GOSPEL: SAINT MATTHEW 17:1-9

Spiritual consolation

18.1 First Point

When temptations and interior trials have been endured patiently, God ordinarily encourages a pure soul with spiritual consolation. The way God gives us this and the way we must respond when we experience it are brought home to us in today's Gospel, which tells about our Lord's transfiguration. This is a symbol of the spiritual consolation that God sometimes gives to souls who are leading a truly interior life.

The Gospel tells us that our Lord was transfigured while praying on a very high, lonely mountain.¹ This teaches us that God pours out his consolation on souls who devote themselves a great deal to prayer and who love this holy exercise.

Those souls who are half-hearted and lazy, who have little love for prayer, ought not to be surprised if they are not among those whom God favors in a special way and with whom he communicates familiarly. They do not enjoy an intimate union with him, because they do not give themselves to the exercise that unites us with God and in which we learn to enjoy God and to have, even on this earth, a foretaste of the joy of heaven.

Be faithful to this holy exercise, so that all your actions may be done in the spirit of prayer.

18.2 Second Point

God is pleased to unite intimately with pure souls, who have no attachment to sin. Still, he does not wish them to become too strongly attached to his gifts, for this attachment in a soul is a defect that displeases him, because it shows that the soul is not seeking God but the gift of God and its own satisfaction.

This is why, when God makes use of consolation to strengthen souls and to give them a chance to rest a little after undergoing trials and tribulations, they must accept this little refreshment with a simple view of God's good pleasure, without being complacent about the personal enjoyment they find there.

The three Apostles who accompanied Jesus Christ on Mount Tabor lacked this balance. Unfamiliar with God's ways, they were more eager to prolong the delight they were enjoying in this mystery than to contemplate God's greatness and goodness, which on this occasion ought to have filled their minds and absorbed all their attention. As a result, the exterior glory of Jesus Christ vanished in a moment and disappeared from their sight.²

That is God's way. He deprives us of the sensible pleasure found in consolation when we are too attached to it and enjoy it with too much self-satisfaction.

18.3 Third Point

Jesus' transfiguration lasted only a short time. This shows us that the consolations that God sometimes allows in this life are only a respite he sends to holy souls in the midst of their interior desolation to help them endure these trials with more courage and to augment their affection, which sometimes slackens off because of the weakness of nature.

Hardly had Jesus Christ enjoyed a moment of consolation in his transfiguration when he found himself once more alone,³ deprived of everything and with no thought of anything other than of the torments he would have to undergo in Jerusalem,⁴ *of which he had conversed with Moses and Elias* and which had been the subject of his conversation with his disciples as they came down from the mountain.⁵

We can understand from this that the passing consolations ought to help us to stir up our courage and to confirm us in the love of suffering and the love of interior and exterior trials, from which we must not expect to be exempt in this life.

1. Mt 17:1–2

2. Mt 17:4–8

3. Lk 9:36

4. Lk 9:31

5. Mt 17:9–12