

The Second Week

The Child Jesus

The Presentation in the Temple

Matthew 2:3-18

Focus: The care of God's providence is made evident.

The Flight into Egypt

Matthew 2:19-23

Focus: God's work is seen in ordinary human decisions.

Jesus Goes Up to the Temple

Luke 2:41-50

Focus: Jesus has a sense of a special call.

While I continue to contemplate Jesus' life, let me begin to examine myself and ask to what state of life or to what style of living is our loving, provident God leading me. Consider how Jesus draws people to himself, while the Enemy of our Nature only enslaves.

Meditation on Two Leaders

We consider Christ, our Leader, Brother and Lord; and, we consider Lucifer, the demonic enemy of all humankind, the one who sums up all the evils that beset us.

Preparation: In the same manner as last week.

Grace: To recognize the false light of Lucifer and for the help not to be led astray. I desire a graced knowledge of true human living exemplified in Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God, and the grace to live my life in his way.

Part 1: To sum up all the forces of evil and the person of Lucifer makes me face the enormous power and oppression of evil itself. Keeping true to my own experience of the world, let me reflect how evil pummels the relations between nations and between peoples within a single country, so that no nation, no city, no state of life, no individual is left unscathed. I want to try and grasp the strategy of Lucifer as I consider how this false angel of light attempts to isolate and enslave men and women in the world according to a certain design. For example, people find themselves tempted to covet whatever seems to make them rich, and next because they possess some thing or things they find themselves pursuing and basking in the honor and esteem of this world. Then getting such deference raises up the false sense of personal identity in value in which a blinding pride has its roots. So Lucifer's strategy is simple and seems so light filled and clear in its direction: riches to honor to pride. By these three steps, the evil one entices people to all other vices.

Part 2: Now let me look at Jesus Christ, who calls himself the Way, the Truth and the Life. I notice how gently, but insistently Jesus continues to call followers of all kinds and sends them forth to spread his good news to all people, no matter what their state or condition. Jesus adopt a strategy which directly opposes that of Lucifer: try to help and free people, not enslave or oppress them. His method: attract people to the highest spiritual poverty, and should it please God, and should God draw them to choose it, even to a life of actual poverty. Being poor, they will then find themselves accepting and even desiring the insults and contempt of the world. They will come to live a life of true humility.

Jesus' strategy is simple too, although at first it seems a paradox. If I have been graced with a gift of poverty, then I am rich; if I have nothing of myself, I have no power and I am despised and receive the contempt of the world; if I have nothing my only possession is Christ and this is to be really true to myself—the humility of a person whose whole reality and value is grounded in being created and redeemed in Christ. Through these three steps Jesus and as apostles lead people to all other virtues.

Because this work is so vital, I go before Jesus asking for the grace to be an apostle, embracing spiritual poverty and should he choose, real poverty. Even greater the ability to endure insults for the Name. May I follow more closely, provided I can suffer these without sin on the part of another and without any offense to God.

Meditation on the 3 Persons

The Setting: This prayer is devoted to considering three different types of people. Each one has quite a few possessions, not always acquired in an honest way. In general, each one is a good person who would like to serve God, even to the extent that if these possessions were to come in the way of being open to God's invitation, each type of person would be to be free of them.

1. "A lot of talk, but no action." This person says they want to be free of all the possessions that keep them from giving themselves to God. They have lots of good intentions but always remain so busy about all the things that fill up life that death finds such a one still thinking about making a bigger place for God in life.
2. "To do everything, but the one thing necessary." This person wants to be free of all attachments, wondering if I work harder, pray more or give more money that would do it. They will do everything except face the block that hinders them to accepting God's gracious invitation.
3. "To do God's will is my desire." I want to be free but am not sure what God is asking me. I want a balanced life so I can easily move in the direction of God's call. They do not want to retain or keep anything unless it is to the service and praise of God. The graced desire to be better able to serve God becomes clearly the motivating factor for accepting or letting go of anything.

Finish with the same encounter with Jesus you had yesterday.