

24. February 2023

LENTEN ITINERARY

Day 11: "The fight against lust"

Today we have reached the eleventh day of our Lenten itinerary, which prepares us throughout these forty days for the great Feast of the Resurrection of the Lord. Today we will continue to develop the theme of the fight against vices. But before we get into the subject, a brief reminder of the stages we have travelled so far on our journey:

- Marked with the cross of ashes, we heeded the call to conversion and set out on this holy journey throughout Lent until the beginning of Holy Week.
- Through fasting we strengthen our spiritual life and add wood to the fire, so that it will not be extinguished.
- Whatever we do, our eyes must always be on the Lord first, and we must expect our reward from Him and not from others.
- We must face adversity along the way and meet it with serenity.
- In the Name of the Lord, we are to repel the attacks of the devil.
- We are called to be shepherds of people and to serve them with works of mercy.
- If we accept the Word of God in abundance within us, it will point us in the right way and preserve us from error.
- In the conversion of Nineveh, we saw the right way to react to threats.
- Purification of the outer and inner temple is necessary. To purify our inner temple, we undertake the fight against vices, starting with gluttony.

Let us continue today with the fight against unbridled sexual desire. Many people are beset by sexual temptations and are confronted with the spirit of lust. Today, the struggle becomes even more difficult, as we are constantly bombarded with provocations in the media and even children are confronted with this sphere at an early age.

But the fathers of the desert also knew these temptations, even though they withdrew into solitude to serve God entirely. We can therefore learn from their experiences. First of all, they point out that it is a "very hard struggle" for those who have to fight it. To overcome lust requires the purification of the heart, i.e. of the inner person. Fasting

and deprivation in eating and drinking, as well as general attention to the control of the needs of the body, will also help here.

If our soul wants to acquire and preserve sexual purity, we must be aware that we will have to fight an arduous battle, which is beyond our strength, and for which we are in dire need of the Lord's help and protection. Such help and protection will we obtain especially through fervent prayer, meditation on the Word of God, the reception of the holy sacraments and a wholesome ascetic lifestyle.

This battle must be fought with great vigilance, paying close attention to the movements of the heart and to our thoughts. In this context, I would like to share with you a video I have uploaded on my YouTube channel, precisely on the spiritual handling of thoughts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CscWQp6bVSo>

John Cassian, whom we had already met and quoted in yesterday's meditation as a good spiritual teacher, points out that God knows even our "hidden consents" to proposals in the sphere of sexuality. Let us ask the Lord that we too learn to perceive them, so that we can reject them forcefully with our will. This is an important step towards purity, and the spirit of fortitude will assist us in the fight.

If we suffer defeat, we must not be discouraged. In the sacrament of reconciliation, the Lord wants to raise us up again to take up the battle. Whoever does not fight, has already lost beforehand; whoever fights and gets up again after his or her falls to continue fighting, is doing what the Lord wants of him or her.

In tomorrow's meditation we will continue with this theme, dealing with the fight against two more vices: greed and anger.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <http://en.elijamission.net/covenant-with-god/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <http://en.elijamission.net/love-to-the-enemies/>