

A Meditation on TWO LEADERS.

TWO STRATEGIES

We consider Christ, our Leader and Lord, our God and Brother, and we consider Satan, the personal enemy who sums up all the evils that beset mankind.

PREPARATION; I make the usual preparatory reverence and petition that God direct everything in my day more and more to His praise and service.

GRACE; I ask for the gift of being able to recognize the deceits of Satan and for the help to guard myself against them; and also I ask for the knowledge of the true life exemplified in Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God, and the grace to live my life in His way.

THE SETTING; There are two unequal parts in this consideration, the first one shedding light upon and giving direction to the more important second part.

1 To sum up all the forces of evil in the person of Satan 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 try to grasp the strategy of Satan as he attempts ever to enslave men and women and the world according to his design. People find themselves tempted to covet riches, and then because they possess some thing or things they find themselves seeking and accepting the honor and esteem of this world. From such honor arises the false sense of identity and value in which false pride has its roots.

So the strategy is simple: to riches (or "this is mine") to honor (or "look at me") to pride (or "I AM . . ."). By these three steps, the evil one leads us to all other vices.

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 adopts a strategy which is just the opposite of Satan: Try to help people, not enslave or oppress them. His method: Attract men and women to the highest spiritual poverty, and should it please God, and should He draw them to want to choose it, even to a life of actual poverty. Being poor, they will be led to accept and even to desire the insults and contempt of the world. The result will be a life of true humility.

Jesus' strategy is simple too: If I have been graced with the gift of poverty, then I am rich; if I have nothing, 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 lies in being created and redeemed in Christ.

Through these three steps, Jesus and His apostles lead people to all other virtues.

COLLOQUY: Because of the importance of coming to some understanding of the opposing forces of these two leaders and their strategies, I enter into the intensity of the prayer by addressing Mary, Christ, and the Father and begging favors from them.

- (a) First I approach our Lady, asking her to obtain for me from her Son the grace-gift to be His apostle - following Him in the highest spiritual poverty, and should God be pleased thereby and want to choose and accept me, even in actual poverty. Even greater is the gift I seek in being able to bear the insults and the contempt of my world, so imitating Christ my Lord ever more closely, provided only I can suffer these without sin on the part of another and without any offense to God. Then I say a Hail Mary or a Memorare.
- (b) Next in the company of Mary, I ask the same petitions of her Son that Jesus may obtain these same favors or gifts from the Father. Then I say the "Soul of Christ" or some such prayer to Jesus.
- (c) Finally I approach the Father, having been presented by both Jesus and Mary. Again, I make the same requests of the Father that He, the Giver of all good gifts, may grant such favors to me. Then I close with an Our Father.