



DAY 24: Meditation

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

This is a continuation of the exercises proper to the second week, coming again from the extra subjects for spiritual exercises in a part titled “The Mysteries of the Life of Our Lord.” **It is found in #269-270 of the Spiritual Exercises**, and the scripture passage proper to this meditation is Matthew chapter 2 verses 13-15, and verses 19-23

1. Act of the Presence of God

2. Preparatory Prayer, as in #46

Lord, I ask that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of Your Divine Majesty. Amen.

3. Prelude 1: Composition of Place

See the long road from Bethlehem to Egypt. Mary and the Child Jesus on a donkey, Joseph leading them on foot through the dry, barren desert landscapes. Merson has a beautiful painting of the holy family asleep during the night on their journey. Perhaps you can use this, or a similar image.

4. Prelude 2: Petition

our petition will be the one proper to the second week, in which we ask “for an **intimate knowledge of Christ**, who has become man for me, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely.”

5. Main Points for Meditation

First point: “Herod wished to kill the Child Jesus and so killed the Innocents, but before their death the angel warned Joseph that he should flee: “Arise, take the child and his mother and flee into Egypt.”

Second point: “He withdrew into Egypt: “So he arose... by night and withdrew into Egypt.”

Third point: “There he remained till the death of Herod.”

Fourth point: “The angel admonished Joseph to return to Israel: ‘Arise, take the child and his mother and go into the land of Israel.’”

6. Developing the Main Points - Commentary using the Catena Aurea

Remigius, quoted in the Catena Aurea, writes: “[**We see that**] the Angel appears always to Joseph in sleep, [and by this] is mystically signified that they who rest from mundane cares and secular pursuits, deserve angelic visitations.” By separating ourselves from the cares of



this world, as we do day by day in the exercises, we dispose ourselves to receive heavenly inspirations.

Pseudo Chrysostom: **“How is this that the Son of God flies from the face of man? Or who shall deliver from the enemy’s hand, if [God] Himself fears His enemies? First; we ought to observe, even in this, the law of that human nature which He took on Him; and human nature and infancy must flee before threatening power. Next, [He did this so that] Christians, when persecution makes it necessary, should not be ashamed to fly.”** Here we see the affirmation of the true humanity of Jesus, he took on the weakness of infancy and submitted to all human laws except sin; since it was not yet His hour, He fled. Spiritually, when temptations persecute us, one of the best remedies is humble flight, removing ourselves from the temptation when possible. I recall an alcoholic who went to a bar during recovery and ordered a beer simply to test his willpower, and he resisted. That was admirable, yet not prudent; sometimes temptations cannot be avoided, as at a wedding where drinks are served, but when we can avoid them we should, aware of our frailty. He should not have gone to that bar.

Saint Augustine: **“Listen to this sacrament of a great mystery. Moses had shut up the light of day from the traitors the Egyptians; Christ by going down [to Egypt] brought back light to them that sat in darkness. He fled that he might enlighten them, not that he might escape his foes.”** God truly closed a door in Bethlehem, and the Holy Family had to flee along an uncomfortable road toward an uncertain destination; yet in providence, when He closes a door He makes something greater possible. Egypt itself is mysteriously visited by the God who came to save all mankind. Egypt, a great symbol of sin and bondage, is shown the light. This strengthens our faith when we face sufferings we do not understand; if we cooperate with God, He will bring something greater from them.

Saint John Chrysostom: **“See how immediately on His birth the tyrant [Herod] is furious against Him, and the mother with her Child is driven into foreign lands. So should you in the beginning of your spiritual career seem to have tribulation, [do not be] discouraged, but bear all things manfully, having this example.”** Saint John Chrysostom reminds us that when we begin a work for God, difficulties are not accidents but necessary; they accompany the work of Christ because, as Fulton Sheen says, “Without a shedding of blood, there is no redemption.” The Christian apostolate is not easy; it is the cross.

We are, of course, in the second week. Having passed through the purification of the first week, God may now grant lights and fruits of deeper union with Jesus; but if you still carry the heavy yoke of desolation, remember that great good can come from it. Draw comfort by uniting yourself to Joseph and Mary as they carry Jesus into Egypt.

Now let us briefly consider the second moment, the Holy Family’s stay in Egypt.

This family had always lived among the religious and cultural practices of Israel, safe in the land where God’s law was observed. Suddenly they are thrust into a pagan milieu, a mixture of ancient Egyptian and Hellenistic religion; Joseph had no contacts and would have begun his



work from the bottom, they would have been poor, and they would have felt the weight of a culture that worshiped false gods and practiced abominations. Their neighbors and companions were far from God. Yet in the midst of this they are at home with the Christ Child; God is more present in Egypt here than He was in the Ark of the old covenant in the temple.

If we are truly doing God's will and not our own, then even if He places us in a very difficult situation, for example if He called someone to work in Hollywood, trying to bring His light into a culture that celebrates and exports sin, we can still keep the faith and bear fruit there.

Finally, let us consider the return from Egypt to Judea.

Saint Jerome: **"When he takes the Child and His mother to go into Egypt, it is in the night and darkness, when to return into Judæa, the Gospel speaks of no night, no darkness."**

Pseudo-Chrysostom: **"to outward view Mary nourished and Joseph defended the Child; but in truth the Child supported His mother and protected Joseph. Return into the land of Israel; for He went down into Egypt as a physician, not to abide there, but to succour it sick with error. But the reason of the return is given in the words, They are dead."**

Once the adversaries of Jesus, especially Herod, had died, He returned to Judea. In a similar way, when the sins and disordered attachments that bind us are loosened, we enter deeper union with God; He comes to us in moments of consolation during this life, and perfectly in Heaven. Penance is not for its own sake, nor is desolation; both are ordered to union with God.

7. Colloquy

Speak with Mary, Joseph, and the Child Jesus as though walking with them on their journey. Ask for the grace that their lives inspire yours, and that by contemplating their example the darkness in your life may gradually be dispelled. And as Saint Ignatius says for the colloquies of the second week, "according to the light the we have received, we should beg for grace to follow and imitate more closely our Lord, who has just become man for me." Then you may close with an **Our Father**.