

Day Five: *The Concupiscence of the Eyes*

“For everything in the world—the lust (concupiscentia) of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.” (1 John 2:16)

Concupiscence of the eyes. What is at the heart of this worldly way of living? Forgetfulness. Forgetfulness that all good things come from God and that all the goodness we find in things should lead us back to Him.

For example, when Jesus meets the rich young man desperate for eternal life, the aspiring saint addresses him as “Good teacher” (cf. Mk 10:17). Jesus immediately responds saying, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone” (Mk 10:18). This response from Jesus can seem somewhat strange at the beginning of this dialogue, but if we read it in the context of the whole exchange between Jesus and the rich young man we can discover that it is Jesus’ way of pulling this young man out of his worldly and superficial vision of life and its ultimate realities.

The young man aspires to possess eternal life, but his view of eternal life is superficial, “this-worldly”. He assumes it to consist in just fulfilling precepts. When Jesus questions him about this precise reality he affirms to have kept all the commandments since his youth (cf. Mk 10:20). And yet, when Jesus out of love reveals to him that eternal life is possessed by those who can detach themselves from this world, the young man goes away sad (cf. Mk 10:22).

Now what does this have to do with the original assertion that all good things come from God? Eternal life depends on leaving behind the “good things” and seeking the one thing necessary: God who is Goodness Himself. Our love for God will always be imperfect and weak if we are seeking something from Him rather than seeking God Himself. We, like the rich young man who went away sad, cannot put our hopes for eternal happiness in simply being good or possessing good things (even spiritual goods like graces, virtues, mystic visions) but in possessing God alone as our inheritance.

The good things we find in nature, in other people and their talents, and in ourselves, are all there to draw us closer to their source: God. When we recognize these good things but forget (or worse, refuse) to direct them back to God, then we fall into concupiscence of the eyes. Our vision is worldly. We see only the temporal reality but are blind to the eternal. This type of worldly vision is what St. Paul criticized in his letter to the Romans.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse, for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened (Romans 1:19-21).

It is clear from what St. Paul says, that forgetfulness of God as the source of all goodness is directly related to a worldly way of thinking and living. We too can become *futile* in our thinking and live *senselessly* if we do not possess a true Christian vision of reality, that is of ourselves, our talents, our goodness, the goodness we find around us, and the world at large as coming from God. All goodness comes from God, but it takes grace and virtue to see such and live accordingly.

Our Blessed Mother, to whom we seek to consecrate our lives in order to follow Christ more perfectly, is our hope and model.

Being praised as the mother of the Redeemer by her cousin Elizabeth Mary immediately sets such blessing in its proper order, returning its goodness back to God.

*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden...for **He who is mighty has done great things for me** (Lk 1:46-49).*

The eyes of Mary's heart and mind are turned to God, not towards herself. Her vision is not tainted with concupiscence but is pure. Certainly, being full of grace helps, but we should not think that the same purity of vision is impossible for us. She can share this grace with us. Jesus wants to bestow this grace upon us. We, however, cannot fully receive it until we recognize our need for it.

Thus, for your reflection: Do you have purity of vision? Are you convinced that all good things as coming from God? Are you convinced *all things* work for your good according to God's gracious will, even your trials and sufferings? And if you do you live by these convictions? Do they influence your way of approaching life and daily circumstances? Do they mold your daily decisions?

Where are you still holding onto a worldly vision of things? Where do you still fall into concupiscence of the eyes (selfishness, forgetfulness of God, self-absorption, egotistical outlook, pessimistic way of seeing things)? What needs to change in order to share in Mary's purity of vision?

- Today's Prayer -

O God, I love thee, I love thee-
Not out of hope of heaven for me
Nor fearing not to love and be
 In the everlasting burning.
Thou, thou, my Jesus, after me
 Didst reach thine arms out dying,
For my sake sufferedst nails, and lance,
Mocked and marred countenance,
 Sorrows passing number,
 Sweat and care and cumber,
Yea and death, and this for me,
 And thou couldst see me sinning:
Then I, why should not I love thee,
Jesu, so much in love with me?
Not for heaven's sake; not to be
Out of hell by loving thee;
Not for any gains I see;
But just the way that thou didst me
I do love and I will love thee:
What must I love thee, Lord, for then?
For being my king and God. Amen.
(St. Francis Xavier)