

(1.19) Spiritual Exercises of a Good Person



The life of a good spiritual person should be replete with virtues so that his inward and outward parts reflect each other; and we should be even be more virtuous inwardly than our outward appearance indicates. The Angels stand before God in purity and our walk in life must be similar as God is our Beholder, so how can we be other than in awe of his Majesty.

We should renew daily our efforts reminding ourselves of our initial enthusiasm at conversion. We have done so little, desire to do more, and it helps to meditate upon the words: *For I am the Lord, your God, who grasp your right hand; It is I who say to you, do not fear, I will help you.*¹

Our progress reflects our purpose and perseverance is required for advancement. Note that there are times when we fail to live up to our expectations; imagine then what could happen without strong resolve! We can stray from our good intentions in diverse ways and even minor neglect will incur some effect. God's graces strengthen the resolutions of righteous persons and trust in the Lord guides us in our choices for our ways are in His hands.

If we have missed a spiritual exercise because we helped a brother or sister we will be often guided to resume it later, perhaps in a new and creative way. But if such has been put aside because of negligence then it is our fault. We can experience failure in diverse ways and use those experiences to identify our greatest obstacles.

When our inner life and outward actions, both important, are in harmony, our virtues will advance. The busyness of the day does not enable us to keep constant tabs on our actions so set aside some time, morning and night, to do just that. Make your resolutions at the start of each day, examine them at day's end; we may find that we have not loved God and neighbor as we should; the Great Commandment states: *you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength and you must love your neighbor as yourself.*²



Build yourself up to resist the world's temptations sent by the evil one; constrain gluttony as a first step and it will then be easier to resist the tendencies of the flesh. Also do not be completely idle but busy yourself with reading, writing, meditating, praying, or working on projects that benefit the community. Physical exercise, in moderation, is good for those who can indulge.

¹ Isaiah 41:13

² Mark 12:30-31

Some things ought not be done in public and personal devotions are better done in secret. *When you pray, go to your private room, shut yourself in, and so pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.*³ On the other hand one should not shirk from community prayer and involvements, personal responsibilities that we are all called to participate in. When such obligations are fulfilled then give yourself the time to meditate as the Lord guides you. There is no one best spiritual exercise so let the Spirit lead you at such times since we are all unique and what suits another may not be best for me. And what is best for me will change from one day to another, some days requiring intense prayer, other times simply peace and solitude; *your ears shall hear a word behind you: "This is the way; walk in it," when you would turn to the right or the left.*⁴ Our moods often change and so does our thinking depending upon whether we are sad or joyful at the time.



During special times of the year such as Lent or Easter or Advent we can renew our good intentions and seek more diligently the aid of the Angels and Saints in coordination with our Lord's. Make your resolutions as if each day were to be your last, preparing yourself for the coming of the Lord, and this will guide you to observe intentions devoutly and in a timely manner. But if this is put off we need to understand that we are not yet well-enough prepared for *the glory to be revealed for us.*⁵

Luke's Gospel notes: *Blessed is that servant whom his master on arrival finds doing so. Truly, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property.*⁶

This article is based on Book 1, Chapter 19 of Thomas of Kempis' writing, "Imitation of Christ." It is not a translation, and there are many of those, but a personal (layperson's) reflection on his writing; if any of it helps give credit to Thomas of Kempis; if any of it fails the responsibility is mine. (rfm)

³ Matthew 6:6

⁴ Isaiah 30:21

⁵ Romans 8:18

⁶ Luke 12:43-44