



Scripture Nugget – Discerning the discouragement of Satan

From that time on, Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, “God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to You.” He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an obstacle to Me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.” (Matthew 16:21-23).

It takes the light of the Holy Spirit to discern God’s will in a particular problem or situation. St Peter found it difficult to discern and accept that God’s plan to save the world is through the bloody Sacrifice of Christ despite being told by Christ Himself. Human factors which impede discernment include human sentiment and faith not strong enough to place God’s will above everything else. Discernment is a revealing of the truth by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not mere human opinion which could be far from the truth. It is based on the truth and not on human sentiment or human logic. St Peter’s response to Christ in this situation was based on his human feelings of care and concern for Christ which overrides submission to God’s will and plan as to how Christ is to save the world. Whenever we do not place God’s will above all things and fully submit to it, we open ourselves to certain weaknesses which Satan is fast to exploit.

One of Satan’s key weapons is discouragement, a major obstacle in the growth of holiness. In this situation, we see how Satan is using the human sentiment of Peter to discourage Christ from fulfilling His divine mission. As if Christ can be discouraged! But Satan tried anyway, and we must always be vigilant against his subtle attempts at discouragement. Discouragement stops us from advancing in godly virtues and good works. Many thoughts that come into our minds are Satan’s attempts at discouragement. If we can identify them for what they are, more than half the battle is won. The battle between Christ and Satan is less in the military battlefield than in human hearts and minds. We can subject our thoughts to the following questions: If I follow this inspiration, what is the outcome? Is it for or against God’s Kingdom? St Paul reminds us that God’s Kingdom has to be won through the endurance of many trials and tribulations. *They strengthened the spirits of the disciples and exhorted them to persevere in the faith, saying, “It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22).* When we discern a thought to be a discouragement from the Evil One, we should have the holy discipline to keep silent and not voice out the objection like the impulsive Peter who won an immediate rebuke from Christ for doing so. Another point to note in this episode of Peter with Christ is that so often we, like St Peter claim to know how things should happen. To this Christ says to us: *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways...(Isaiah 55:8).*

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. Purify my heart and my mind, and fill me with Your humility, wisdom, discernment and final perseverance. Bestow upon me a great love for God’s will so that I may overcome all discouragement and obstacles that Satan puts in the way. Let Your Passion, the source of our light and strength, enlighten and fortify all souls so that all may find their way safely to the eternal joy of their transcendent destiny. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for us. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.