

Chapter 4, 2-6

2 ... our souls must not be afraid because (as I have said elsewhere in what I wrote for the sisters), as long as we live in obedience and with a pure conscience, our Lord never permits the devil to prevail or to deceive us in any way damaging to our soul. He himself however is often deceived. As soon as he knows he has been, I think he does less damage to us than we do to ourselves through our own perverse behavior and bad moods (especially if these be melancholy-depression). Women are naturally weak, and our self-love that lives in us is very subtle. Many people have come to me—both men and women—as well as the nuns of these monasteries, who I can clearly see were often deceived, though against their will! I firmly believe that the devil is accustomed to meddling in such matters on purpose to deceive us. But of the great numbers whom, by God's goodness, I have seen, I did not observe that our Lord abandoned them: perhaps He wished to test them with these fears so they might gain more experience.

3 Because of our sins, the things of prayer and perfection are so forgotten in the world (on account of our sins), that I consider it necessary to share my thoughts. If people, even without seeing any danger, are afraid to walk this way, what would it be, if they were told there was possible danger? It is true, however, that in everything there is some danger; and therefore, as long as we live, we should always walk in fear, and ask our Lord to teach us the right way, and not forsake us. But (as I believe I once said) those who are earnestly striving to think of God and to make an effort to become more and more perfect are in much less danger.

4 O, my Lord! as we see that You often deliver us from dangers into which we willingly put ourselves even if it offends you, can we believe that Your Majesty will not free us, when we have no other goal or desire but to please You and spend time with You? This I can never assume. It might indeed happen that God's secret judgments may permit some things to turn out one way, and others in a different way, but never did He draw evil out of good. And thus we should be excited from now on to walk even faster on our road to perfection in order to please our Spouse and to be with Him sooner. This should not make us weary but rather encourage us to walk with fortitude through the rough spots of this life and not be terrified by our journey. In the end, by walking with humility, we shall, through God's mercy, arrive at the city of the heavenly Jerusalem where all that we have endured in this life will appear as little or nothing in comparison with the joy we shall then possess.

5 As these little dove-nests (convents) of the Blessed Virgin Mary began to populate, our Divine Majesty began also to show His greatness in these poor, weak women, though strong in good desires and in a detachment from every creature. It is this detachment that tends most to unite a soul with her Creator, especially if she walks with a pure conscience. There is no need to prove this point, for if the detachment is real and sincere, it seems impossible to offend God. And as all their conversations and meditations relate to Him, so His Majesty appears unwilling to depart from them. This is the truth for this is what I see. Let those who come after us pay attention when they read these words. If they don't see what we see, let them not attribute it to the times they live in. At all times God is ready to bestow favors upon those who serve Him in earnest and try to discover and correct whatever imperfection there may be in them.

6 I have sometimes heard it said concerning the beginnings of Religious Orders, that the builders of the foundation were granted greater favors by our Lord than us today. It is true, but we should consider that we also are foundations for those who come after us and if we who are living now don't lose the fervor of our predecessors, and if those who succeed us should do the same, the building will always continue to be firm and solid.

QUESTIONS:

1/ What do souls who practice interior prayer have to fear?

2/ How can one understand humility and detachment in light of a reciprocal relationship with God?

3/ What does number #6 tell us about the link between becoming a child of God and becoming a father or a mother?