

A Lenten Guest Series by Father Konrad zu Loewenstein
5. DELUSIONS OF THE DEVIL



1) 'I cannot resist the temptation'

But the Apostle tells us: 'God is faithful and never permits us to be tempted above our strength (1 Cor 10.13).' And if you cannot resist now, how will you be able to resist next time?

2) 'I am young and there is time for conversion'

But how do you know that there is time? And do you not know that God counts not the years but the sins of each individual? You are young, but how many sins have you already committed? There are many people of advanced age who have not been guilty of the tenth part of your sins. When the measure of the sins that He has resolved to pardon is completed, He will send a sudden death, or, which is worse, abandon you to your sin.

3) 'I will sin, but I will confess it later'

Tell me, would you cast yourself into a pool of freezing water and say, perhaps I shall not be drowned?' Would you take a boat into the middle of the ocean to the point where it is at its deepest, and there cast into its bosom the most precious object you possess, a jewel, an heirloom of priceless worth, and say: 'I can always come and retrieve it another day?'

But now you hold in your hand the infinitely precious jewel of your immortal soul, and you voluntarily cast it into Hell, and say: I hope to recover it after a good confession. And when will this confession then be? To-morrow? But who promises you to-morrow? St. Augustine says: 'God has not promised you to-morrow: perhaps He will give it: perhaps He will not'. And if you do confess to-morrow (which is unlikely), how will you arouse the necessary sorrow? For every time you sin, this becomes more difficult. Yielding this time will make it more difficult to resist hereafter. For each sin is like the blow of the hammer on the anvil, which serves only to make the iron harder, and so the sin hardens your heart ever more, and makes it ever less malleable to the operations of Divine Grace.

4) ‘God is merciful’

Yes, God is merciful, but to whom? - to those who fear Him: ‘As a father has compassion for his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them who fear Him.’ (Ps 102). He is merciful but also just, and He executes justice on those who despise Him. ‘I am just and merciful’ said the Lord to St. Bridget, ‘but sinners regard me only as merciful’.

‘But He has been merciful up till now’. Yes, but there is a limit to His mercy, and when you have exhausted the number of mercies that He has resolved to show you, He will then punish all your sins together.

St. Augustine says: ‘He who sins with the intention of afterwards repenting, is not a penitent, but a mocker of God’s Majesty’. The net with which the devil drags to Hell almost all of the Christians who are damned is the delusion that they will later be pardoned.

5) ‘Perhaps’

Perhaps I shall not be lost! But what happens in the meantime? You condemn yourself to Hell. How many people have perished unexpectedly in their sin, even in the act of sin itself? Do not say: ‘If I commit this sin, why should I not expect to be escape damnation? I may yet be saved’. Yes, but you may also be damned: and indeed it is more likely that you will be damned, for the Scriptures menace eternal woes to obdurate traitors, such as you are in your present dispositions’.

6) ‘The Church is Mistaken’

We add a last delusion typical of the modern age.

The Church is mistaken, and left behind in the Middle Ages, exaggerated, austere, opposed to pleasures and happiness. Humanism, Atheism, or Buddhism fits better with the facts, with human nature and psychology. At death we will cease to exist; or we will be born again and eventually dissolve into the sea of Being that is God.

But how are you so sure? If you were now on your death-bed would these thoughts give you any guarantee or comfort? What of the

two thousand years of the Catholic Church? What of the Life of Christ and the saints, what of the Holy Scriptures, and all the writings of the saints and those of the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church? All of this has an infinite profundity and wisdom, all enjoys a miraculous harmony, a harmony between what one saint has said and another; between Faith and life; and between the teaching and examples of all Catholics that have ever lived. How do you explain this all away?

And what is it in the end that you disagree with? I shall tell you, and that is the source of all your delusions: it is the teaching on the flesh: on the indulgence of the senses, on the possession of worldly goods, on pride. It is this that holds you in its thrall: it is this that makes you say: I can't resist; I'll convert later; I'll confess; God is merciful; "Perhaps"; it is this that makes you reject the Faith. But better first to put your own house in order, submitting to Reason and Faith, confessing and returning to God, and then to think again.