

My Strength Is Sufficient Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time Saturday, June 22, 2019 **2**
Cor 12:1-10; Mt 6:24-34 (St. Paulinus of Nola; Sts. John Fisher and Thomas More)
(BVM) (The plan is for God to be with us in our weaknesses, in our failures, in our losses “in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me.”)

“Therefore, that I might not become too elated, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated.”

Well I read this text the way it is written in our present day Bible, although I think it’s a bad translation. The word here could grammatically mean elated, but it doesn’t fit the context. What is the context? **The context is St. Paul talking about his experience of God, his tremendous, ineffable experience of mystical encountering of God.**

Now if you want to talk about St. Teresa of Avila and her mansions; it’s a good reference point. She mentions that most people live in the basement of their house, their castle, their mansion, but upstairs there are beautiful rooms, full of light and beauty. They don’t go there, for whatever reason. Now **St. Paul was up in the penthouse; he calls it “the third heaven.”** That’s an expression; we are not sure exactly what it means, but it means **a very high level of mystical awareness.**

Now when Carl Jung, the psychologist, talks about the experience of God he says there is a problem with this. When people go from the basement, so to speak, the ordinary ego, and then they have this experience of God, they can experience what Jung calls inflation. Well this word in Greek can mean inflation, can refer to being exalted or to exalt oneself, to be filled with a sense of self-importance and Jung actually says to be filled with a sense of divinity, but in a bad sense. **We need to be filled with a sense of divinity in a good sense, but there’s a sense where we actually become, in a sense, cut off from reality and actually psychotic**—actually psychotic, mentally ill that means, so full of God that we are crazy. It happens. Jung talks about this at some length.

I believe that's what St. Paul is talking about. In order to prevent him from becoming mad, in order to prevent him from being too self-inflated, God gave him a thorn. Well what do thorns do? Thorns puncture. **Thorns deflate:** balloons, tires, anything with spirit, air. The word in Greek for spirit is *pneuma*, and that's the same word for spirit: spirit, air. You get the idea; it's all connected, at least in the world of Greek words. **So God let some of the spirit out of St. Paul, deflated him a little, lest he go completely bonkers. This is the thorn in the flesh.**

And the point is that **St. Paul asked God to take away this whatever it is.** Now how are we deflated? **We are deflated by failure, weakness, incompetence, even sin.** So he says, "God, take this away." And God said, "My strength is sufficient." This is the highlight of the whole passage—"My strength is sufficient." **God doesn't take us out of our problems, but he is always with us in them,** and his strength is sufficient, **"for power is made perfect in weakness—power is made perfect in weakness."** We pray for our weaknesses to be taken away. We pray for our problems to be taken away. We pray for our pains to be taken away. That is probably not the plan. **The plan is for God to be with us in our weaknesses, in our failures, in our losses "in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me."**