

Day Twelve Meditation: Life & Death in the Tongue

The tongue has the power of life and death,
and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Pro 18:21

When you read the above and believe it, this little verse will become a great source of wisdom for you to bring about a flourishing life or one of slowly decaying death. It seems this verse might be an exaggeration to drive home a point, but the truth is that the Word of God reveals the reality of the workings of our souls and the universe. We know that “God said, let there be ... and it was.” God spoke, and it was. The Trinity has shared their life with us by making us share their joy and glory in creating, and they have placed that power in the spoken word, our tongue. Our words to our spouse, our children, and the words of our self-talk, shape lives. The truth of the spoken word can serve us as an encouragement in speaking blessings or a carrier of caution from speaking a curse; the choice is yours. A wise, well-spoken word can heal and bring forth life in ways that we cannot imagine

As kids, we learned to toughen up with the phrase, *“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.”* What a lie. Either we feel the cut of harsh words, or we harden our hearts so that we deceive ourselves into thinking they did not matter. Yes, there is a time to toughen up, but it is not by pretending that nothing happened in our souls when the darts were thrown. In our youth, we also enjoyed words that proclaimed that we did well and that our parents were proud of us.

Throughout history, the right words have changed its course, leading to the increase of life. These words are not just ones that have prevented wars, but words that raised up fallen souls who could not see the way forward. Imagine the power of words that go forth from your mouth with love and respect. Every soul you meet is made to receive words of life; it is only the wounding of our souls because of sin that words can carry a curse.

What is a curse and what is a blessing? A curse’s desire is to linger in the soul, constantly echoing what we come to believe is wrong about ourselves and that belief then holds us captive to talking in blessings, while a blessing fosters hope to flow through us, watering all it touches, as a river of life.

Your marriage’s foundation is the words by which you received the gift of the other who offered you their life as a sacrifice. These words, your vows, are your wellspring to which you need constantly return, drawing from them the life the Holy Spirit is yearning for you to live. This is not to deny the words that have been spoken by the one whom you trusted to guard your heart, words that bring pain.

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The Holy Spirit wants to grant you wisdom on how to move forward in your struggles to stand for your marriage, whether you are living with a spouse who is distant and barely caring or one who has broken the relationship through separation or divorce. The wisdom that brings peace begins by allowing the words of life your beloved has spoken to be heard once again. Maybe you cannot recall any words of grace your spouse has given you. If that is the case, return again and again to the foundational words, your vows.

“I,, take you,, to be my husband/wife.

I promise to be faithful to you

in good times and bad,

in sickness and health;

to love you and honor you all the days of my life.”

These are the words that will be remembered throughout eternity. They are not cheap or sentimental. Every Sacrament has holy words and holy actions. The vows and the marital embrace release from Jesus the love that becomes the source of Divine Life, one for the other.

No matter the state of your love for each other or its lack, you have within your tongue that which will bring life to you and your beloved. It is easy to begin speaking of your spouse in ways that expose their weaknesses or to simply lie about them. If you want life in your marriage, in your love for each other, then begin only to speak words that build them up and show the gift they are, yet they might have forgotten to be.

Your first life-giving words are the ones that only the Father hears when you are in prayer. They are words of gratitude for what your spouse has been and has done for you and your family. Tell your Father for which you are grateful about your spouse, and He will increase peace and joy within you. This might be an act of trust, and it might be hard to believe the very words you speak as having any power in them. In the beginning, you might struggle. Continue in the struggle of looking for the blessings that are there, but your hurt might be clouding your sight. When your Father sees the willingness of your soul to bring life, He cannot help but turn toward you with great pride and affection.

Note: There will come a day when we look at the hurtful, breaking words your husband/wife has spoken over your life. You have probably noticed that what has been considered so far does not address changing what lies outside you. You are not of the flesh with its ways. You are a son or daughter of the Father, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and because of Jesus' incarnation, you are a sharer in the Sacraments, which allows you to partake in his Divine Nature, living from Jesus as the source for your marriage. The orientation of your heart toward being reduced to love is the road to holiness on which you are growing from glory to glory. Hold on, trusting the sanctification process.

Another area of your life where your words must be chosen and brought into obedience to Christ is how you speak of your spouse before your family and friends. You vowed to honor them as you stood before the Altar of God in the Father's House. Your words are one of the greatest ways that you honor or dishonor. This does not mean that you can't turn to others for

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help or just to be heard. It is your attitude that will come off as either honoring or dishonoring. Choose wisely and you will bring forth life, or choose otherwise and receive its results. Also, choose wisely those to whom you will speak, asking yourself if they can bear your words without coming to a harsh judgment of your spouse. You are responsible for what they come to believe about your husband/wife through your words. Your slashing of your spouse will cut into the one to whom you have turned for help and relief, infecting them with suspicion or anger toward your beloved, if you are not careful. Your words, seasoned with grace about your spouse, will lift their hearts and encourage you to continue your noble fight for what is yours and needs their support.

What do you do if you have spoken words that are not of the Spirit of God, but the hissings of the ancient dragon? Repent! Get to Confession, telling the priest the bare truth of what you have done to sully the name of your beloved, causing calumny, and gossiping. These are not small sins. You might need to take some real time recalling what you have done, asking the Holy Spirit, who loves you so, to remind you of the things you have said. You might need to write down prompts. I am not suggesting you share each with the priest, but you might hand the priest the paper on which your sins are written. Then, take responsibility for what you have done, do penance to repair your offence, and decide not go there again. Rip up that page, maybe even burn it, knowing you have forgiven, and also as a sign that you never want to write such a page again.

After this, humble yourself before those with whom you have shared. No need to replay what you have said. Keep it short, *"I am sorry that I spoke of my husband/wife to you in the way I did. It was wrong, and you should not have heard it."* They might dismiss your repentance or agree with the calumny you placed in their ear. Do not try to explain your decision to do the right; rather, say the above, listen, and then let go, not continuing the conversation. Choose humility, for it is the soil of holiness for you and for your marriage.