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“Renew your joy for the struggle”

Sometimes you feel that you are beginning to lose heart and that everything is getting on top of you. This kills your good desires, and you can hardly manage to overcome this feeling even by making acts of hope. Never mind: this is a good time to ask God for more grace. Then, go on! Renew your joy for the struggle, even though you might lose the odd skirmish. (Furrow, 77)

1 February

There are many who repeat that hackneyed expression 'while there's life there's hope', as if hope were an excuse for ambling along through life without too many complications or worries on one's conscience. Or as if it were a pretext for postponing indefinitely the decision to mend one's ways and the struggle to attain worthwhile goals, particularly the highest goal of all which is to be united with God.

If we follow this view, we will end up confusing hope with comfort. Fundamentally, what is wrong with it is that there is no real desire to achieve anything worthwhile, either spiritual or material. Thus some people's greatest ambition boils down to avoiding whatever might upset the apparent calm of their

mediocre existence. These timid, inhibited, lazy souls, full of subtle forms of selfishness, are content to let the days, the years, go by *sine spe nec metu*,* without setting themselves demanding targets, nor experiencing the hopes and fears of battle: the important thing for them is to avoid the risk of disappointment and tears. How far one is from obtaining something, if the very wish to possess it has been lost through fear of the demands involved in achieving it! (Friends of God, 206-207)

* 'Neither hoping nor fearing'