

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to John (John 15:4-5)

Remain in Me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in Me and I in him will bear much fruit, **because without Me you can do nothing**. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – I am nothing. God is everything

Pride is the root of all evil. Pride causes angels to fall and become demons. Pride introduced Original Sin into the whole of the human race. Pride transforms hearts and minds to be out of touch with true reality. Thus, pride cannot recognize evil as evil, and sees evil things as being desirable and worth having. Pride opens the door wide to demonic deception. Pride trivializes sin, gives excuses for wrong doings but will never rouse oneself for true repentance. All has fallen short of the glory of God and all souls, except that of our Blessed Mother, are stained with the sin of pride. As a result of Original Sin transmitted from our first parents, we are naturally inclined to sin through our pride. However, Scripture tells us: where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more (cf. Romans 5:20). God is merciful always. Through Jesus Christ, God makes available all the graces we need to conquer our pride and sin, and to attain holiness and sanctity.

Man is a beggar before God (cf. St. Augustine). Without God's grace, we are dust and ashes, a truth which we always forget. It is pride that places self on top of everything and around which everything revolves. Pride establishes self as a false god when the concerns of self become more important than allegiance to God. Thus, God gives us His commandments with the sole objective of helping us walk on the true path which leads to our glorious eternal inheritance God has prepared for every one of His children. God's commandments of love: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37, 39) tear down all false gods in the hearts and minds of those who diligently abide by His holy commandments.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matthew 5:3). To be poor in spirit is to be ever mindful of keeping our sinful pride in holy control and to understand and remember that we are totally dependent on God for everything we need from our first breath when we are born, to the last breath on our deathbed. To think otherwise is not in touch with true reality. Thus, those who understand and practise poverty in spirit are truly blessed for they will be able to receive all the graces needed to overcome temptation and made themselves fit for heaven. *Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32).* God wills every one of His children to be saved but God cannot force His graces on those who do not open their hearts to receive it. The first step to salvation is to decide that we want salvation which can only be granted to us through Jesus Christ since it is His Blood that redeems the world.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted (Matthew 23:12). In the Scripture account of the prayers of two men, a Pharisee and a tax collector in the temple at the same time (cf. Luke 18:10-14), we are reminded how God detests proud behaviour manifested when one thinks oneself better or holier than others, and how important sincere repentance is in the eyes of God. The Pharisee could have done many good things but his pride caused the displeasure of God. The tax collector could have committed many sins in the past but his sincere repentance made God look favorably upon him. At the end of the day, the repentant tax collector won more favour with God than the 'holy' Pharisee. This is a good lesson on the dangers of self-righteousness and complacency – the ugly fruits of hidden pride.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You said that You are the vine and we the branches. You teach us that by ourselves we cannot do anything. Fill us with Your humility and courage. True humility is a holy attitude of the heart and is to always remember our place before God Who is above all and in all, and to live in His constant presence. It is to acknowledge and remember all things come from Him, and that we are totally dependent on Him from our first breath to our very last breath. It is to be vigilant and courageous not to allow our culture, the world we live in, the people we mix with, our desires or passions to cut us off from living in God's constant presence. Humble our proud spirits so that You can make us instruments for Your mission on earth where the culture of pride and sin is so prevalent in these times. Guard our hearts with holy love and humility so that we may render to You our love, fidelity and allegiance in our thoughts, words, actions and by how we live our daily lives. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.