

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Book of Psalms (Psalm 42:1-2,11)

As the deer pants for streams of living water, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Saviour and my God. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – Am I a Mere Observer?

Why do I not feel the hunger for God? God made us for Himself, for the pleasure of His goodness. Scripture tells us our souls thirst for God like a thirsty deer panting for streams of living water. The message is clear – our souls are hungry for God and long to meet with God. St. Augustine expands upon this truth by saying that the human heart does not rest till it rests in God. Our true destiny is in God alone. Our true thirst is for God alone. Our true peace is in God alone. Why do I not feel the thirst and hunger for God as I should?

..the desires of other things come in and choke the Word, making it unfruitful (cf Mark 4:19). In the parable of the sower there are four types of soil. In the first two types of soil: a path and rocky soil - the Word of God did not produce fruit as it was not given opportunity to grow in the first case and in the second, the seed could not grow roots. In the third type of soil, soil with thorny plants, the seeds grow but eventually do not become fruitful as they have to compete with thorns for their nourishment. The thorns symbolize the worries of life and desires of the heart for other things that do not contribute to the expansion of God's Kingdom but instead compete against it in terms of our love, time, energy, resources. As a result of worries of life and the desire for other things, the heart is full. There is not much room left for the highest and the most important life-giving desire – the hunger and thirst for God alone. Thus, a great enemy of our souls is the competing desire for other things. It maybe a career, money, hobby, health or even family. Ironically, the gifts that God gives to us have become our enemy in diverting love and attention from the Giver of the gifts.

Many people look for 'mountain top' experiences. They are weary and tired and seek to be refreshed, not just physically but spiritually. They would go for spiritual retreats. Some would experience the presence of the Lord and be renewed in a way that transformed their whole lives. Others would experience similar 'mountain top' experiences, made resolutions but would return to their former lifestyle after a short time. The same can be said of those who visited places where apparitions of Mother Mary took place e.g. Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje, etc. Though the places visited are the same, the experience of the presence of God by each individual is not. Some succeeded in making the divine visitation into habitation of God's presence and making God the priority in their lives. The less vigilant others allow the old competing desires to insidiously creep back and take control of the heart again. After an initial emptying of the heart, it is full again with other desires. There is again no more room for God. Life is again dreary and lacking in real joy.

Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:33). God assures us that if we have our priorities right and put Him first in our lives, we will not be in need "for all these things will be given to you as well" if we give God the rightful place in our lives. If we do that, we will not be hungering over lesser desires which will dull our thirst and hunger for God. God is our sovereign King and should be accorded the proper place in our lives for it to be joyful and fruitful.

Experiencing the Presence of God is a decision. Like other important matters in my life, welcoming God into my life and living daily in His presence is a decision. It cannot happen by chance. I need to actively desire and work towards this end. It is a life decision. In the highest form of our worship - our Holy Mass - do I strive to steer my heart, my intellect into Christ's Spirit of agony and death as the Sacrifice is renewed on the altar? Do I school all my senses into awe and great love when I receive my Saviour who humbled Himself to be present in a piece of wafer, in Holy Communion? Do I lead my heart into great sorrow and contrition when I come in Confession before my Saviour who in agony and pain, dripped with blood for my redemption? If God is the reason for my being, how can I take my faith so much for granted?

Conversation with Our Lord

Precious Lord, in many things I have taken You for granted. I have contributed to the agony and pains of Your Sacred Heart. Forgive me. Help me to empty my heart of all the desires that do not lead to You. Only when my heart is humbled, contrite and emptied, will You be able to come in and take up Your rightful throne in my life. Illuminate my heart, Lord, and shine Your light into the blind corners of my heart. Help me to accept any illumination of conscience You choose to send me. O Mary, conceived without sin, intercede for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.