

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter to the Hebrews (*Hebrew 5:11-14*)

About this we have much to say, and it is difficult to explain, for you have become sluggish in hearing. Although you should be teachers by this time, you need to have someone teach you again the basic elements of the utterances of God. You need milk, and not solid food. Everyone who lives on milk lacks experience of the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties are trained by practice to discern good and evil. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection - Exhortation to Spiritual Renewal

Vigilance against lack of faith and disobedience, and learning from the mistake of the ancient Israelites who wandered 40 years in the desert. The Israelites had witnessed first-hand the mighty power of God in the plagues and miracles of the Exodus. They could see the presence of God in the form of a pillar of cloud in the day, and a pillar of fire at night (cf. Exodus 13:21). Despite this, lack of faith and disobedience of the Israelites led to their downfall. After their exodus from Egypt, God commanded them to enter the Promised Land and take possession. It was a land flowing with milk and honey (cf. Exodus 3:8). The Israelites sent 12 spies to survey the Promised Land, exploring for 40 days. 10 spies came back with bad reports saying that the Israelites would not be able to overcome the current, strong inhabitants. Only 2 faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb believed they could overcome the current inhabitants. The people, however, chose to put their faith in the bad reports, forgetting that by commanding them to take over the land, God has already assured them of victory. Instead, the faithless Israelites lost heart, put on a great lamentation, incurring the wrath of God Who declared that not a single of those who had no faith in His Word would ever set foot on the Promised Land. As a result, the Israelites spent 40 years wandering in the desert until the unfaithful generation die off, one year for each day of exploration! **Without faith, it is impossible to please God (cf. Hebrews 11:6).** *Make no mistake: God is not mocked, for a person will reap only what he sows (Galatians 6:7).*

Vigilance against spiritual lukewarmness. *So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth (Revelation 3:16).* Lukewarm believers are Christians only in name. Because of their worldly pursuits, their love for God has become lukewarm. They may go to church but their faith takes the form of some kind of religiosity which does not touch their everyday life. People around them cannot tell them apart from the non-believers. They failed to develop a personal relationship with Christ. They are self-sufficient and it would not occur to them to consult the Lord in any decision-making or to discern God's will for them. Full of their own agenda, they cannot hear God's call to them to grow in holiness and to live a life befitting of children of God. *They are the people who hear the Word, but worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the Word, and it bears no fruit (Mark 4:18-19).* Caught up with the world, their minds and time are spent mostly on worldly things than things of God. They are complacent and think they are doing well. The Lord, however, sees them as "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" (cf. Revelation 3:17).

Vigilance against complacency and pride. Prideful souls have a common characteristic. Unconsciously they always place their self-interest first. They are quick to defend their rights. Pride comes from the heart and defiles the soul (cf. Mark 7:20-23). It was pride that caused Lucifer to be banished from heaven. It was pride and disobedience that caused Adam and Eve to be banished from the Garden of Eden. It was pride that blinded the eyes of the Jewish religious leaders and elders from recognizing their Messiah when He appeared in their midst. *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God (Matthew 5:8).* Pride blinds us to our sins and to the reality of our standing before God. We took pride in ourselves but in fact all our achievements are only our cooperation with God's grace, without which nothing is possible. Our next breath relies on God's grace. Pride encourages unforgiveness, over-sensitivity, grudges, and nurses hurts. Pride is over-sensitive to the opinion of others. Thus, pride opens the soul to temptations of all sorts. Jesus shows us how to live our lives and walk humbly with God. Through His incarnation, Jesus made Himself nothing so as to take on human flesh in order that He may suffer in the Body and shed His Blood for the sake of us. Through His crowning with thorns, Jesus gives us the graces needed to overcome our pride.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, fill me with the Spirit of Truth so that I can be shown clearly all my flaws and sins on my soul. Through Your agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, give me true sorrow for all the hurts I have carelessly caused You. Help me reflect and recall always all the good You have done in my life so that You will always remain my first love, eschewing all the false attractions of this passing world. Renew me in mind and spirit, and place within my soul a deep and abiding love for You and an ardent desire to serve You faithfully all the days of my life in accordance with Your holy will. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk