

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Galatians (*Galatians 5: 16-18*)

I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – Be overcomers of the spiritual battle within us

Every child of God has to fight valiantly against the spiritual battle in our heart and mind. We, believers in Christ, begin to feel the spiritual battle within us more acutely when we resolve to commit our lives to the Lord and to respond sincerely to His call to holiness. In our struggle against sin, we are made very conscious of the spiritual weaknesses that are naturally present in us. Even after Baptism we still have some effects of Original Sin. However, the grace of God is greater than any weakness that we struggle against. Our old sinful nature, the ‘flesh’ will always be with us as long as we are alive, and this will wage war against the Holy Spirit given to us at Baptism since the desires of the flesh are self-centred and motivated by selfish interest while the desires of the Holy Spirit are God-centred and governed by holy love. Through the power of God’s grace, we can become overcomers in the spiritual battle within us.

Competing against God’s call to us to holiness, the world calls us in many ways. Knowing the powerful influence the world had on His apostles, Jesus prayed for them to the Heavenly Father saying: *“I do not ask that You take them out of the world but that You keep them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world” (John 17:15-16).* God wants us to remain in this world and to be its light and salt, to be His instruments in drawing souls to Him. The world, through the mass media which is used with great dexterity by the Prince of the World (Satan), untiringly transmits to us its secular values such as disbelief of God, relativism of moral values, rejection of the truth of sin, idolatry of earthly treasures and pleasures, primacy of self over others’ welfare, false ideologies regarding human life, human sexuality and gender, etc. It steadfastly promotes to us the things we should have in order to feel “arrived” at the point of human achievement, the way we should behave in a politically correct manner. It disdains the values and truths of our faith. St Paul says: *But we proclaim Christ Crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).*

Putting on the mind of Christ. We would not be able to resist the powerful influence of the world unless we put on the mind of Christ by letting His teachings guide us in every aspect of our lives: how we think, how we behave, and how we live. The mind is an important battlefield for the evil one. His intention is to undo the saving work of Christ, to trivialize the seriousness of sin, make us get used to sin and accept it in our soul. He leads us into error, thinking in a way that is not Christ-like, putting as first priority own self-interest over the welfare of others. He leads us to value earthly treasures and achievements over growth in personal holiness. He constantly reminds us of the faults of others and encourages unloving and judgmental thoughts, leading to prejudice and hatred. Leveraging on the selfishness of human nature, he attempts to occupy the minds of souls with endless pursuit of trivial activities which have no bearing on one’s eternal salvation. Knowing that we have only 24 hours and one life, Satan tries to dissipate our time by preoccupying our minds with many activities which are not necessary.

Putting on the heart of Christ. *With all vigilance guard your heart, for in it are the sources of life (Proverbs 4:23).* We must guard our hearts from excessive love of earthly things and treasures. Love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). We have to be vigilant against seeking human approval and affirmation over and above pleasing God, and prevent pride and disorderly self-love from taking root in our heart. Otherwise, our hardened hearts will have difficulty discerning God’s call to us to holiness, and may harbor unforgiveness, indifference, anger, jealousy, over-sensitivity, hurts and grudges, all of which are fed by pride and disorderly self-love. Once our hearts are not right with God, our actions will correspondingly fail to please Him. A good tree yields only good fruits whilst a bad tree yields only rotten ones (Matthew 7:17-18).

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, teach me to pray with my heart, and open my heart to Your graces. Give me the grace to be led by Your Holy Spirit. Help me understand my real enemies are not flesh and blood but Satan and his demons, my pride and the lure of the secular world. I commit my life to You. Please take possession of my heart and mind. Form my mind with Your everlasting truths. Let no deception take root in my mind. Purify my heart and fortify it with holy love and humility. Keep me always focused on You, my Crucified Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk