

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the first Letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – We are made to be blessed, holy and happy

God wants every one of us to be truly happy and has the power to make us happy. Among all His creatures, only mankind is made in God's image. Thus, we are like God in many ways: we have an intellect to reason, a heart to receive love and give love, and an everlasting soul which in its state of grace is filled with sanctifying grace, the life of God. Yes, we are made wonderfully to last forever! Most of all, we have like God a free will, a most precious and meaningful gift of God to us. To point us the correct path to walk, God has given us His divine laws and teachings through His prophets and His Son, Jesus Christ. God's natural, immutable laws are imprinted in the hearts of all people so that all may know with a good conscience what is good and evil, what is right and wrong. When mankind fell from grace, God demonstrated, beyond a shadow of doubt, His great love for mankind in the Incarnation, Life, Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Saviour and Redeemer, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. To understand God's love in depth and to prevent our love for God from becoming lukewarm, we need to meditate often on the tremendous personal sacrifice God has done for us. Through Jesus Christ's First Coming to us in human flesh, the dignity of humanity is elevated and our position as creatures becomes exalted to that of children of the Most High as God adopts us through His Son, Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 1:4-5). This great privilege changes everything of importance concerning us. We become co-heirs with Christ to God's glorious kingdom! If we place all our trust in God, He can turn even the worst evil into something good for us in accordance to His will (cf. Romans 8:28).

To rejoice is to feel the true happiness of the soul. God wants us to rejoice always. He wants us not just to be happy on the surface but to feel the joy of our inmost self. This is the true happiness that only God can give. No earthly treasure or pleasure or person can give this true happiness. It does not come from a huge bank account, nor does it come from the love, admiration or adulation of others. God alone is the Maker and the joy of our soul. The reason for our soul to rejoice is because God is great, and He reigns! *If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete (John 15:10-11).* True joy is within the reach of all, rich or poor, great or little. Christ teaches us that the way to true joy is to remain always in God's love. To remain in God's love is to abide by His commandments, to let our minds and conscience be formed by God's immutable laws and truths, to walk in the footsteps of Christ, carrying our crosses and living our lives not for our own narrow agenda but for glorifying God's will in conformity to our calling from above. It is to prevent ourselves from being corrupted by sin and the world. *As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, the living God (Psalm 42:1-2).* Our fleshy, sinful nature, which we need to overcome, pulls us downwards to earthly things but our soul finds its fulfillment only in God. *My soul rests in God alone, from Whom comes my salvation (Psalm 62:2).*

To be truly happy, we need to be holy. Jesus says to us: *Be perfect as Your Heavenly Father is perfect* (cf. Matthew 5:48). We are never asked to rely solely on our human power but to always open our heart to receive God's grace for everything we need. Through the Life, Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, all the graces we need in order to overcome temptation, live lives on earth worthy of children of the Most High and for the sanctification of our soul to be made fit for Paradise, are made available to us. **The best is yet to come.** Every good parent knows how to prepare and secure the future of the child. God can do infinitely more. St Paul who was caught up in spirit to the third level of heaven said: No eyes have seen, no ears have heard nor can the human mind imagine the things God has planned for those who love Him (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9). Indeed, God knows how to reward those who love Him. He will not be outdone in generosity. Our lives are like a blank cheque which on the last day will be presented to God. How much we want to give God is our personal decision.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, I am not able to rise up, rejoice and render You praise as much as I should because my soul is weighed down by my sins and my heart is encumbered. Forgive me all my sins and infuse joy into my soul. Purify my heart of everything that does not come from You, and let Your Holy Spirit pour Your love into my heart, so that I can raise my heart in praise of Your Name, the joy of my soul. Enlighten the eyes of my heart so that I can see Your loving Hand in my life and the richness of the glory of my eternal inheritance to which I am called. Sanctify my soul so that I can look forward to my homecoming and living deeply my new life of grace in union with You in Your Paradise where gladness never ends. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk