

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Romans (*Romans 14:7-9*)

None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For this is why Christ died and came to life, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection ~ In life and in death we belong to the Lord. Death has lost its sting

Every life is brought forth by God and has its special divine purpose. *You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I praise You, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works! My very self You know (Psalm 139:13-14).* Scripture tells us that we are wonderfully made by God Who thought about us even before Creation. Before Creation, God willed to bring us forth to be holy and without stain and to receive all His spiritual blessings through Jesus Christ. Indeed, we are truly blessed when in the pleasure of His divine will, He destined us for adoption through His only begotten Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 1:4-5). We may not understand the full significance of being children of the Most High till we are in heaven where God's glory and His gifts will be fully revealed to us. *For we are His handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them (Ephesians 2:10).* God has prepared us to do the good works that He has planned even before we were born. God has endowed us with gifts and graces such that each has his/her own unique contribution to the building of God's Kingdom on earth.

Everything exists for God's glory. *We exist for the praise of God's glory (Ephesians 1:12).* Everything exists for the praise of God's glory. This is the highest mission of every creature. The little bird flies and sings, praising God's glory. The beautiful flower blooms, praising God's glory. The mountain towers in awe and majesty, praising God's glory. The fish swims through the waters, praising God's glory. Mankind was made in God's sacred image and given the precious free will that God Himself enjoys. Given that mankind is endowed with so many wonderful gifts from God Who made all other creatures submissive to man, mankind is in a far greater advantage to render more glory to God through the exercise of the free will and employment of all the gifts and graces coming from the bounty of God. *Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out: "To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever" (Revelation 5:13).* Yes, let all that breaths praise the Lord! (cf. Psalm 150:6).

To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek Him the greatest adventure; to find Him, the greatest human achievement" (St Augustine). St Augustine also says, "But my sin was this, that I looked for pleasure, beauty, and truth not in Him but in myself and in His other creatures, and the search led me instead to pain, confusion, and error." Indeed, unless we give God the proper place in our lives i.e. the only One who deserves all our love, adoration, allegiance and obedience, and our every thought, word and deed reflect this, we will like St Augustine find that our efforts, search and dreams lead to error, confusion and pain in this life or the next. If we do not give the love, reverence and allegiance to God as rightly due to Him, we will find that His place will be taken by idols whether these be a thing or a person or our own self. God does not need us. God is God. He is already great in His own glory whether or not we His creatures acknowledge it. *The God who made the world and all that is in it, the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands, nor is He served by human hands because He needs anything. Rather it is He who gives to everyone life and breath and everything (Acts 17:24-25).* God seeks and calls us unceasingly because of His everlasting love for us, His children, His most precious creation.

I have kept the faith, I have completed the race and now I go forward confidently to receive my eternal crown of glory from the Lord (cf. 2 Timothy 4:7-8). God is just but He has never destined us for His wrath but salvation through Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:9). The sting of death is sin which is what that will condemn us if unrepented. Through Christ's redeeming act on the Cross, God has given us victory over our sins so that at the end of our life, we can say together with St Paul: I have kept the faith, I have completed the race, and now I go forward confidently to receive my eternal crown of glory!

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You have prepared a place for me in heaven (cf. John 14:2). My true citizenship is in heaven. Death is but a step closer to Your eternal glory which I will share. I know that my present sufferings cannot be compared to the glory that will be revealed to me, and all creation await eagerly the day when the children of God will be revealed (cf. Romans 8:18-19). *All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord Who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).* Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me that I may be worthy of what God planned for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk