

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – Love is our highest purpose, and the yardstick of our final judgement

God is love, and to qualify to live with Him in heaven, we need to learn to love as He does. God's purpose for each and every one of His children is established even before the creation of the world. In love and in His good pleasure, He destined each one of us to be His child by adoption through Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 1:4-5). To prepare for an eternal life of love, joy and wonder with God, we need to develop our character so that our heart will be transformed to be like His. We have our whole lifetime to learn how to love like God. God puts us in the midst of a family, relatives, friends, co-workers, colleagues. Loving is all about developing our relationship with God and with those around us. Christ tells us the greatest commandment is to love God above all things, people and human concerns, and secondly, to love others as much as we love ourselves (cf. Matthew 22:37-39, Luke 10:27, Mark 12:30-31).

Loving God as He deserves. *Jesus said: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments (John 14:15).* If we love God, we must trust that His commandments and divine will is for the ultimate purpose of our eternal welfare. God's divine will is entwined with His commandments. If we claim to love God but do not keep His commandments or trust in His will for us, our love is meaningless. Jesus gives us a great example on how to love God. God's will for His only begotten Son is extremely difficult in every aspect to carry out. It requires the highest possible level of filial obedience and unshakeable trust in the Father. Nevertheless, Jesus executed the Father's will to perfection when on the cross He uttered, "It is accomplished" just before He died (cf. John 19:30). Our Blessed Mother Mary said her fiat to Angel Gabriel to become the mother of the Saviour even knowing that an unwed mother will be stoned to death. Abraham obeyed God's command to sacrifice Isaac even when it was extremely painful to him. **Thus, a reliable barometer of our love for God is the level of trust we have in Him.**

Loving others as much as ourselves. During Jesus' time on earth, He mixed with the lowly and those considered "sinners" – tax collectors, prostitutes and money lenders. His behaviour incurred the disapproval of the Pharisees. Jesus was not afraid of negative human opinion. He was not ashamed to mix with the lowest stratum of the society. He was not seeking something from them but striving to give them the gift that God alone can give - eternal life of love, joy and wonder. Jesus did not consider whether they are deserving of His attention but was simply acting out of pure compassion in His heart for these "sinners" that other people shied away from. We should protect ourselves from abusive and manipulative relationships but for those who are weak materially, emotionally or spiritually, God requires our compassion so that we can become the mouth, eyes, heart, hands and feet of Jesus as God reaches out to them. Jesus teaches us a very powerful lesson when He said: ***Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of Mine, you did for Me.* (Matthew 25:40).** In the light of such divine teaching, a rational question like "What do I get out of this relationship?" becomes irrelevant. Instead, holy love for them compels us to have an active concern for their welfare especially their eternal salvation.

We will only be judged on how we have loved. On our judgement day, we will not be judged on our qualifications, successes, wealth, popularity, fame, etc. – these are God's gifts – but how closely our heart resembles that of His Son. He will judge how much our lives resemble that of Jesus: a life of love and untold self-sacrifice. He will judge us on how much we have proven our trust in Him. We will be judged on how merciful and compassionate we are to others. ***Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy (Matthew 5:7).*** We will be judged on how much we adhered to His commandments and teachings.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, thank You for the wondrous love You have for me. It was love that brought me into being from nothing. It was love that bestows upon me the highest dignity I can ever have – a child of God, the Most High! It was love that raises me up again and again from my sinfulness and fallen nature. It was through love that You are constantly with me even when I do not perceive Your holy Presence. Teach me to be like You. Help me to show You how much I love You by remaining true to Your Word, by putting my trust in You, by giving You my time and by giving Your compassion to others around me. Teach me to love as You do so that I can render to You the love that You truly deserve. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk