

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to John (John 16:7-11)

But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you. And when He comes He will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation: sin, because they do not believe in Me; righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see Me; condemnation, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – The Holy Spirit gives us the grace of conviction of our sins needed for true repentance

In the spiritual sense, we are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness. The devil works hard at ruining souls. If we do not place ourselves under the dominion of God through obedience to His commandments, the Enemy of our souls will try to place his dominion over us. Thus, when we place ourselves outside God's blessings, we will be easy prey for Satan's wiles and deception though we may not perceive it. The battle between Christ and Satan is in the hearts and minds of souls. Satan's deception does not come with the ugly appearance of horns and tails of the devil but always clothed in seeming goodness. Even for the baptized who willingly comes under the dominion of Christ, there is a constant struggle between our spiritual nature and our sinful, fleshy nature. Whenever we sin and do not repent of it, we become a slave to sin. *Jesus answered them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin (John 8:34).* A slave has no will of its own. It has no choice but to obey its master. Only grace from God can break this bondage to sin. **Sacramental Confession is a powerful grace to break bondage to sin and gives us inner strength to avoid temptation.** Thus, we are exhorted to avail ourselves of this Sacrament frequently.

It is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth that convicts us of our sins. Why did we at some time in our life, knowing the consequences of sin, still persisted in unrepented sin? Coming under the slavery of sin, we willingly accepted Satan's deception that sin is no big deal and that there is plenty of time to change. Our hearts and minds hardened and darkened by sins were not open to receive the mighty grace of conviction of sins that the Holy Spirit works hard to give us. We have yet to set up a loving, personal relationship with Christ. We were blind to the truth of the horror of sin. We failed to understand what sin does to God and our souls. We failed to reflect on the great Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary for our sakes. We were blind to the truth of the extent of God's personal love for us on one hand, and God's rigorous justice on the other. God loves His children beyond measure but His holiness will never tolerate any evil. We did not understand the need to flee from sin. We failed to grasp the truth that sin is the worst thing on earth as it is the only thing that can separate us eternally from God. However, once our soul has been convicted by the Holy Spirit of our sins, we will be cut to the heart in sorrow in the moment of truth when we realize that even a venial sin against God's immense, sacrificial love is a great dishonor to God.

To fight sin, we need to be led by our faith, not by our feelings (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:7). As long as we are in the flesh, we will always be in the battle between good and evil. Whatever the temptation, God's Providence ensures that we have all the graces we need not only to overcome temptation but also to grow in holiness. We know our real battle is not against other people who make life difficult for us but against the wiles, deception and temptation of Satan, his demons and agents (cf. Ephesians 6:12). We need to be led by the Holy Spirit Who gives us the grace of conviction of our sins, the grace of true repentance and to grow in holiness. As baptized believers we are already sealed with the Holy Spirit. However, sins grieve the Holy Spirit, and we should never tolerate the presence of unrepented sins in our souls. Thus, it is a necessary and important spiritual exercise to make good and regular Sacramental Confessions throughout the year. When we walk in obedience to God's commandments, we place ourselves under the control of the Holy Spirit. We will have a fuller indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Christ's life of love and sacrifice is the model for us to emulate. We must be ready to sacrifice our will, desires, preferences, overcome our fear of suffering, and trust in God's plan for us, in order to follow God's will. We need to grow in faith and holy love, and discernment of God's will through a sincere prayer life and a daily study of God's Word. Just reading it is not enough. We need to commit God's Word to our memory, our mind, to assimilate and live God's Word in our daily lives. **To know God's Word but fail to put it to practice and live it is to build our house on sand (cf. Matthew 7:24-27).**

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, God our Heavenly Father loves us beyond telling and sent You to us for our redemption. He did not destine us for wrath due to our sinfulness but to gain salvation through You (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:9). Help me fight valiantly against evil and sin by putting on my breastplate of faith and righteousness, and the helmet of salvation. Give me all the graces to be led by Your Holy Spirit and to overcome my fleshy sinful nature. Help me detest sin as You detest it. Mary, Most Pure, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk