

Scripture Reading

A reading of the Gospel According to Matthew (Matthew 26:40-41)

Then He returned to His disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with Me for one hour?” He asked Peter. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – Do not be taken in by the Master of Lies

Our real enemies are not human beings but Satan, the enemy of our Salvation and the evil spirits who serve him (cf. Ephesians 6:12). The ultimate purpose of the actions of the Evil One is to bring final damnation to as many souls as possible. Satan hates God and since cannot touch God, this is the best way he can resort to in order to hurt God as God loves each of His children with the fullness of divine love.

Satan attempts to destroy what God builds up in a soul - grace and holiness. He tries to contaminate a soul through temptation to sin, and to distance people from God. Through his many tricks and suggestions, he aims to undermine faith in God and bring discouragement and despair so that people no longer trust God. Through false suggestions to human minds, Satan tries to build up self-pride in hearts especially those that are weak in humility. Through temptation, he tries to introduce impurity and sin into a soul thereby causing it to lose its sanctifying grace - the divine life of the soul. Satan uses ordinary people who are entangled in vice or sin as his instruments to execute his tricks and tempt other souls to sin.

Counter the accuser with holy silence. *When Jesus was accused by the chief priests and the elders, He gave no answer (Matthew 27:12).* Jesus knew that these people through their pride, were the instruments of the evil one. He could have used His divine power to silence them but instead He wants to teach us how to react in such a situation when we are faced with fierce unjust accusation: do not engage or argue with the Evil One. Ignore him, and his influence over the situation will fade away.

Practice of virtue that directly opposes the temptation. How easy it is for the Evil One to plant prideful suggestions into the mind of a person not strong in the virtue of humility. Humility is one of the greatest weapons against Satan. How easy it is for him to plant seeds of hatred and unforgiveness in the hearts of those who are not strong in the virtue of holy love and the spirit of generosity. How easy it is for the poor soul to believe the accusing thoughts about another person who has offended him/her in some way. Satan through his suggestions to the mind, tries to conjure up images of the offending person to be more evil than in reality, thereby promoting hatred and dislike. To those who are genuinely trying to get close to God, he plants suggestions into their minds that they are holier than others thus sowing the seeds of spiritual pride. All thoughts that distance us from God are inspired by Satan (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:5). In the Garden of Gethsemane, Satan through his suggestions encouraged the disciples to sleep instead of keeping awake to keep the Lord company. Let us put on our helmet of salvation (cf. Ephesians 6:17), and strive to be alert so as to be pure in our thoughts and to reject without hesitation any unloving, judgemental, discouraging, or despairing thoughts which oppose holy love and truth.

Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one (Ephesians 6:16). One of Satan’s main weapons is the use of discouragement to make sure that it is very difficult for a soul who has fallen from grace to rise up quickly, and to promote the falsehood to souls that it is too difficult to strive for holiness especially in lukewarm souls who forget that with God all things are possible (cf. Luke 1:38). He has many tricks up his sleeve. He uses dwelling on past sins and mistakes to cloud a soul’s advance in holiness. Or he may use undue worry about the future to undermine a person’s trust in God. When a soul confronts a difficulty he will try to make the soul focus on the difficulty of the situation rather than on the love and power of the Lord in helping the person. A person with a deep faith and trust in God will be able to resist the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Conversation with the Lord

Precious Lord, I come before You as Your little child. Teach me how to be truly little. You said: “*Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 18:3). Teach me to be humble, simple, innocent and childlike. The devil, the enemy of my salvation prowls around me like a lion waiting to devour me (cf. 1 Peter 5:8). Help me put on the breast plate of righteousness (cf. Ephesians 6:14) and maintain my soul in a state of grace through sincere practice of Christian virtues, an interior life of prayers, mortification and fervent use of the Sacraments especially frequent Confession. With my soul in the state of grace, You can claim sovereignty over my heart, and Satan will have less power to tempt me. Give me the precious gift and privilege of true devotion to Mother Mary whom God has declared to be an arch enemy of Satan together with Yourself in the battle between good and evil (cf. Genesis 3:15). As such, Mary is given great power to help and protect Her children especially those with true devotion to Her, against the wiles of Satan. Mary, Mother of Salvation and my own Mother too, protect me always from all harm. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.