

## Scripture Reading

### **A Reading of the Gospel According to Matthew** (*Matthew 13:15*)

For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Reflection - Failure to see ourselves as we really are – Sinners in need of healing**

**We live in a world which denies the existence of God.** As the existence of God is denied, there is no acknowledgement of sin. Sin is not seen as what it is but claimed as an individual right of choice. Thus, people claim to have the right to terminate the innocent new life in their womb, the very place one would assume to be the safest place in the world for a little baby. As it is, the logically safest place turns out to be a slaughter room for an innocent life which is created by God. Do we really expect the world to be a safe place when even a mother can consider it her right of choice to take the life of her own baby? Our minds are numbed by so many outrages that we seldom feel much when the next outrage presents itself. Every sin affects all humankind as all are related by grace since we are all children of God. There is no such thing as a private, harmless sin. We forget that our sins wound not only ourselves but also the mystical body of Christ, His Church and the world.

**For this people's heart has become calloused... (Matthew 13:15).** There is only one thing that can harden a heart – sin. Unconscious to us, every time we go deeper into selfishness and pride, our hearts progressively harden and we become more and more spiritually blind. We fail to see the plight or difficulty that other people are suffering which result usually from the sins of others, as we are focussed on pursuing our own interests. Depending on the nature of the object of our pursuits, we can be drawn into slavery of all kinds. *Everyone who sins is a slave to sin (cf. John 8:34).* This explains why Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation / Confession so soon after His resurrection, giving divine power to the apostles and their successors the power to forgive sins, thereby liberating the sinner from demonic bondage.

**Our pride sets up false and double standards in our eyes.** The reason so few of us recognize the gravity of sin lies in the yardstick that we use. We choose to look at it in relation to how we feel about it instead of to God. In our eyes a fault is serious or small depending on the personal impression that this fault produces in us. Thus, we use a personal standard established by our pride by which to judge the gravity of a sin against God. We forget that the seriousness of a sin does not depend on our feelings or lack of feelings regarding it but how far such an offence against God's infinite goodness and love takes us away from Him, the One who worked so hard to redeem us from our sins, and the only One who can truly make us happy. Besides setting up false standards, oftentimes we are culprits of double standards in our own favour. In our pride, we unconsciously set ourselves higher than others and exempt ourselves from the strict standard we may use to judge others, thus blinding ourselves to our faults which remain hidden from us.

**Our imperfect love for our Lord fails to give us a clear understanding of how much our Lord suffers for us on account of our sins.** Whilst most believers of Christ have some idea of how much Christ suffered in His person for the salvation of each and every sinner on earth, few really have hearts changed by this truth. We are limited by the paltry love our poor hearts hold for the Lord. A failure to grasp the extent of the sacrifice Christ endured for us lead to only one thing: a failure to grasp the seriousness of sins and the depth of His love for us. Ironically, we may show great concern for a friend suffering from a mild headache but it would surprise ourselves if our minds turn to contemplate how Jesus feels when He lies on the Cross for more than three hours waiting to die, with every muscle in His Body seized in pain. Would we really allow for the Son of God to die for a bunch of ungrateful people?

### **Conversation with Jesus**

Precious Lord, You know I am weak through and through. Only in You can I be strong. I refuse to take sin for granted and to be mastered by it. For all You have done for me, I surrender to You my heart, my life, my will. May I never take Your sacrifice for granted but increase in love for You each day through a loving recall of Your Sorrowful Passion. In entrusting my will to You, choose for me what is good and holy. In this way, I will not fall into self-centredness which opens the door to Satan's wiles. Show me where my free will through self-love has chosen wrongly and has magnified my crosses. I wish to follow the inspirations of Your Spirit within me so that I can be led not by my sinful inclinations but by holy love. In this way, I will be open to receive Your graces and my crosses will not become a heavy crushing load but a manageable, sweet burden of love. Mary, Mother of Salvation, give me the grace of hatred of sin for what it has done to Jesus. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.