

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Gospel According to John (John 8:34)

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – Sins deprive us of the Highest Freedom

Sin is the worst evil on earth. *To the eyes of faith no evil is graver than sin and nothing has worse consequences for sinners themselves, for the Church and the whole world (CCC 1488).* There are many evils in this world: poverty, disease, famine, pollution, etc. but none of these have the lasting spiritual effects of sin which cannot be seen by the physical eyes as they are spiritual. Because of the hidden spiritual effects of sin, people are not awakened to the truth that their sins determine their final eternal destination and, thus fail to take sins seriously.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23). The final effect of a fully grown sin is spiritual death. *This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:49-50).* Hell exists for the unrepentant sinner who refuses to seek forgiveness from God. Sin hurts everyone, not just the sinner. Even God is hurt! God says through Prophet Isaiah "you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses." (Isaiah 43:24). Because Jesus has taken upon His Body the sins of the world in His Supreme Sacrifice on Mt Calvary He is now suffering more intensely in a mystical way as sins are continuing in unprecedented severity in these times of great apostasy.

Sin is simply doing what God says we cannot do. In the Garden of Eden when our first parents fell into the first sin committed by humankind, they simply disobeyed what God told them not to do. They wilfully ate the forbidden fruit despite being warned by God. There was nothing wrong with the fruit itself but there was the command of God about the fruit. If we deny the truth of the existence of God, then there is no such thing as sin. This is the fundamental problem of our world today where God, the source of all our good, is not recognised and given His proper place in the world which He created and belongs to Him. His supreme place above all is denied Him and the love He deserves is not rendered to Him. Thus, sins are not recognised and the worst evil piled up in the world which is collapsing under its own weight of guilt and iniquity. In confusion and error, sin is glamorized and even legalised and viewed as progressive and desirable in our topsy turvy world of today.

Why do we not take sin seriously? Due to our sinfulness and pride, we judge whether a sin is serious or otherwise based on the feelings it produces in us. We fail to take into account the tremendous effect it has on our souls and the distance it created between us and God who loves us so much that He gives all He has in order to reconcile us to Himself through the sacrifice of His own Son, Jesus Christ. *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 (Matthew 13:15).*

Everyone who sins is a slave of sin. Sin puts us into a situation where the devil has a greater influence over us. Unrepented sin in the soul makes it lose its sanctifying grace and prevents the soul from being able to receive all the graces of God. Thus the soul is distanced from God, and weakened in its will to follow the true path; bad habits and vices tend to become stronger and harder to overcome. However, God makes provision for everything so that where there is sin, grace abounds all the more (cf. Romans 5:20). **God's loving Providence led to the institution of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.** Immediately after His resurrection, Christ confers power on His apostles to forgive sins (cf. John 20:22-23). Thus, God fulfilled His promise that *though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool (Isaiah 1:18).*

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, You are love and all unloving thoughts, desires, words and actions are sins offending Your infinite goodness and love. I am a sinner and it is precisely because of my sins that You came to save me through Your death and resurrection. In my life I fall again and again despite my good intentions. But I know that I need not despair for Your grace will be ever available to me to lift me up and put me back on the true path if my heart is open to You and Your love. Give me a great understanding of what sin does to my soul, my most precious possession on earth. Give me a great aversion to sin as it distances me from You. I ask You to purify my mind and heart always and renew my soul as I avail of Your Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently. Mary, Refuge of Holy Love pray for me. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus. www.twohearts.hk