

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of James (*James 1:2-4*)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – Being trained to be worthy of His Kingdom

Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrew 11:6). God brings us forth into existence from nothing so that we may know Him and in knowing Him to love and serve Him and to share in His eternal life and happiness. This is God's loving plan for all persons brought into existence in this world. God ardently desires that all people know the truth of His love for us and to share His eternal life and joy (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4). Our God is a loving father who desires nothing but the best for His children. To walk the narrow path of salvation towards our eternal home in Paradise, we need to persevere in and never give up on our God-given faith.

Sin has entered the world through the disobedience of our first parents. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God they put a great gulf between our holy and loving God and sinful humanity. Hope for humanity was bleak but God was quick to redress this dire situation by promising the sending of a saviour in the very person of His own beloved Son, Jesus. Through this, God participates fully in the pain humanity has brought upon itself through its sinfulness and rebellion against God. We need to do our part. We need to persevere in our love and faith in God.

Because of the existence of sin and temptation, our faith needs to be strengthened. God's action is always directed towards eternal salvation for His precious children. God will not impose on our freewill which is a gift from Himself that makes us like Him. However, He will do whatever He can in His power to strengthen our faith so that we remain on the narrow road to our eternal home in heaven. To do this God puts us through trials of all kinds. The greater the faith He wants to see in a particular child of His, the greater the trial He subjects the beloved child. *My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent His rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, as a father the son He delights in (Proverbs 3:11-12).*

God tests greatly those whom He loves greatly. We see how God the Father tested Jesus to His limits when Jesus sweated blood in the Garden of Gethsemane when He foresaw that even in dying for the salvation of mankind there will be many people who will still reject Him. We see great testing of Mary's faith when she had to let go of Jesus, her Son to do what God wills for Him to do so that mankind can be saved. We see great testing of Abraham's faith when God asked him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. As gold is purified by fire, so faith and trust in God can only be strengthened through testing. Thus, we see that testing of our faith though painful is only temporary and is necessary for our eternal happiness. In every temptation God provides a corresponding amount of grace to enable us to endure or overcome the temptation (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:13). We can avail of this grace through an open and humble heart. God's graces are lost on the prideful.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, when I am in the midst of difficulties and problems which seem insurmountable, let me never forget that You love me and that I am being tested because of Your love for me. Help me overcome feelings of despair and hopelessness. My indestructible hope is in You Jesus, Lord, Mighty God. Just as a loving mother would not hesitate to administer the bitter medicine to her sick child, so too You do not hesitate to send me trials and difficulties that will help me re-prioritise my life, free myself of attachments and activities that clutter up my heart and my life, let go of my pride and disorderly self-love and allow myself to be humbled by what I am going through. Only then can I walk along the road of faith and trust in You.

You will never allow me to be tested beyond what I can bear (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:13) but through my faith and trust in You, You will pave a way out for me. In confidence I offer to You my heart, my life, all my difficulties and sufferings in union with Your own Sorrowful Passion so that they can become meritorious and redemptive in value to help You save souls that are so precious to You. In sharing Your bitter chalice I know I will share in Your glorious resurrection. Let the light of this truth penetrate my heart so that I may never fall prey to the temptation of despair and hopelessness in the times when the testing is severe. Give me the strength to pray: Not my will but Yours be done! Mary, Protectress of the Faith, make my faith strong. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.