

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Letter of St Paul to the Philippians (Philippians 2:12-13)

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed - not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence - continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – Let us refrain from being self-reverential. It is God who gives us the intention and powers to act

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling (cf. Philippians 2:12). Paul's practical advice holds good for all generations of Christians. Despite the truth that our salvation was gained through so high a price paid personally by our Lord Jesus Christ, we oftentimes take it for granted. Jesus won salvation for us through His own suffering, pain, blood and death. Yet we are too slothful to meditate on His Passion and enter into His Spirit of sacrifice. For a lesser earthly goal, we are ready to put in every possible human effort and resources. However, when it comes to our salvation, we become laid back and expect confidently that we will not be the ones to go to hell. Yet, Jesus tells us clearly that not those who merely called Him "Lord" will enter the Kingdom of heaven but those who also did the will of the Heavenly Father (cf. Matthew 7:21).

Our self-assurance comes from the deception that all the good we have done in our lives comes from our own efforts. Society holds much admiration for the so-called "self-made" man. Usually, it is a story of a rise from poverty and difficulty to great material wealth and success. In the absence of faith in the existence of God, attribution of success to self is logical and inevitable. However, in doing so, man makes himself his god and then his world revolves around him as the mover and changer of his world. Is there any wonder there is so much arrogance in this world? The followers of Christ are not free of this deception either. Oftentimes, we assume we are something before God when in fact we are nothing without His graces. Abraham stated a truth when he said to God that he (Abraham) was nothing but dust and ashes (cf. Genesis 18:27). Jesus said: *I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5).* Yes, without God's grace, we cannot even pronounce our own name.

Even our good intentions come from God. God has written His moral laws on our hearts (cf. Romans 2:15, Jeremiah 31:33). *I desire to do Your will, my God; Your law is within my heart (Psalm 40:8).* Our soul seeks out the Lord as its purpose, its food, its guide, its strength, its final destination. *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? (Psalm 42:2).* The body, however, seeks gratification of its senses. Thus, we feel the conflict within us as our innermost being yearns towards the heavenly while the body inclines towards the earthly. *For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want (Galatians 5:17).*

How we see ourselves before God will determine the degree of reverence we give ourselves. We have hidden pride because we think we are something when in fact we are really nothing before God apart from His grace working in us. We forget the good deeds we did was through cooperation with God's grace. We forget the good intentions and desires we have were inspirations of the Holy Spirit that has written God's moral laws on our hearts and minds. But once we are free from this deception, we can be true to ourselves like our Father Abraham who admitted before God that he was nothing but dust and ashes and like our Blessed Mother Mary who proclaimed Herself to be a servant of the Lord during the Annunciation.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, in coming to earth in human flesh, You gave up Your glory and take on nothingness, coming as a servant of God. You gain for me all the graces I need to surrender my hidden arrogance and pride to You. Humble my spirit and mold my heart to become like Yours so that it may be filled with holy and divine love. Strengthen my desire to grow closer to You and serve You all the days of my life with zeal and joy. Pour out Your Holy Spirit upon me, and make me an instrument of victory over sin in the world around me. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.