

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Book of Tobit (*Tobit 12: 15-20*)

"I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand and serve before the glory of the Lord." Greatly shaken, the two of them fell prostrate in fear. But Raphael said to them: "Do not fear; peace be with you! **Bless God now and forever.** As for me, when I was with you, I was not acting out of any favor on my part, but by God's will. **So bless God every day; give praise with song.** Even though you saw me eat and drink, I did not eat or drink anything; what you were seeing was a vision. So now bless the Lord on earth and give thanks to God. Look, I am ascending to the One Who sent me. Write down all that has happened to you." And he ascended. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – A lesson from an Archangel

Archangel Raphael taught Tobit and his son, Tobiah to thank and praise God always. Tobit was a righteous man who thought nothing of going out of his way to do something good for others. Then Tobit suffered misfortunes and prayed to God for death. Archangel Raphael was sent by God to help Tobit and Sarah, Tobit's future daughter-in-law to overcome their problems. When all had ended well, Archangel Raphael revealed that he was not a man but an angel sent by God. Before his parting Raphael taught Tobit and Tobiah, to bless and praise God every day. God is also helping and protecting each and every one of us every day though we may not have the wisdom to discern His Hand in our daily lives. **We too should praise and thank God every day in gratitude for His unending goodness and unfailing love.**

Praise is the first order of prayer. All glory belongs to God and should be returned to Him. We do our part in returning the glory that is due to Him by praising Him in our thoughts, words and deeds. We are made to praise and glorify God. This is our true and pure nature in which we are created. A soul laden down and corrupted with sins is unable to open the heart to praise and thank God. In the "Our Father" prayer, Jesus teaches us many important points regarding prayer. He teaches us to address and to regard God as our Heavenly Father. He teaches us that the first thing in prayer is to render praise to God: "Hallowed be Thy Name." He teaches us that the needs of His Kingdom take precedence over ours: "Thy Kingdom come." (cf. Matthew 6:33). He teaches us that doing God's will is the most important: "Thy will be done..." After all these are addressed, then come our personal petitions. **How often are our prayers laden with requests but short on praises and thanksgiving?** How often do we ask God to help us do His will? How often do we pray for and expend efforts to build up His Kingdom?

Praise is an acceptable sacrifice to God (cf. Hebrews 13:15). *The four living creatures, each of them with six wings, were covered with eyes inside and out. Day and night they do not stop exclaiming: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, Who was, and Who is, and Who is to come."* (*Revelation 4:8*). In heaven when each and every one of God's elect are safely within its gates, the only prayer God's children will render God will only be praise, adoration and thanksgiving. There is no longer any need for sacrifices or petitions. In eternal blessedness and joy, we will join the nine choirs of angels who stand before the throne of God praising Him unceasingly. Even on earth we should follow the example of the four living creatures in heaven in rendering praise to God unceasingly in everything we do. God deserves it, and our soul delights in praising its Maker, its Joy, its Fulfillment, its Highest Good. If we do not praise God as we should, the stones may rise up to do the job for us (cf. Luke 19:40) and may act as witnesses of our ingratitude (cf. Joshua 24:27)! *And in His temple all cry, "Glory!"* (*Psalms 29:9*).

Praise is fitting for righteous hearts. *Rejoice, you righteous, in the LORD; praise from the upright is fitting* (*Psalms 33:1*). God can look deep into our human heart. Our praise will be empty and useless if it does not well up as an appreciation and thanksgiving from a heart that fully acknowledges all the good God has been doing for us. It is not seasonal, it is not perfunctory, it is not just lip service. But rather, it is our joy, our delight, our true nature. It is the true attitude of a grateful heart. **To do this, we need to keep our heart pure so that our soul can rise up to render praise and thanksgiving to God.**

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, I unite my heart to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and lavish on You all the praises and thanksgiving that our Blessed Mother never stopped rendering You. Keep my heart pure so that I will always be grateful for what You have done for me. Keep my soul in the state of grace so that it may always rise to do what it loves to do: glorify You without end. As I put on the garment of praise, chase away all the spirits of darkness which flee at Your praise, and fill me with Your joy (cf. Isaiah 61:3). Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. May the most Sacred Heart of Jesus present in all the tabernacles of the world be adored, loved, praised and glorified forever! Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.