

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Book of Psalms (*Psalms 139:7-10*)

Where can I go from Your Spirit? From Your presence, where can I flee? If I ascend to the heavens, You are there. If I lie down in Sheol, there You are. If I take the wings of dawn and dwell beyond the sea, even there Your hand guides me. Your right hand holds me fast. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection ~ Blessed are those who live in God's presence and draw strength from Christ's Passion for every trial
God's promise: Though we may not feel it, God is with us in every moment (cf. Matthew 28:20) and is close to the broken-hearted (cf. Psalm 34:19). God's constant presence to us is a solid proof of His care for us. Though God has billions of children, He loves each one as if each is an only child. In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus tries to help us understand this. God is like the good shepherd who guards his flock with his own life and goes in search for even one lost sheep as if He has only this one. God proves beyond a shadow of doubt how precious we are to Him when He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus to redeem us from sin, death and hell, and to bestow on us grace and eternal life. Living consciously in God's holy presence in difficult moments is more than half the battle won. *I keep the Lord always before me; with Him at my right hand, I shall never be shaken (Psalm 16:8).* Simple prayer like: "Thank You, Lord for being with me. I treasure and adore Your Presence" said frequently during the day is a great help in reminding us of His abiding presence in and around us. **A key to holiness is to live in God's holy presence in the present moment irrespective of what the situation is.**

God's Promise: No trial will break any child of God for those who rely on Him (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:3). God will never impose on our freewill but He is always present, always ready to help and strengthen us with His graces so that we can emerge strengthened, renewed and victorious in any trial or suffering God deems it necessary to send to us. God's promise is that we would not be tested beyond our endurance but with every trial, there is a way out. The way out may not be immediately apparent but when we trust and put our dependence on God, we will be given the graces of self-control and perseverance that are needed not just to overcome the current trial but also to build up our character. *For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7).* In any adversity, self-control is needed to overcome unholy fears and anxieties that can destroy our peace and make us lose focus on the Lord. We cannot stop the negative human feelings but God gives us the grace to control them so that even in the face of strong winds and high seas, we know for sure that we will not sink simply because the Lord is in our boat.

Christ's Passion is a source of strength for those who have the wisdom to seek it. During His time on earth, Christ experienced all the sufferings that humankind will be subjected to: physical suffering of the body, mental and emotional suffering of the mind, and spiritual suffering of the soul and spirit. As Christ's sufferings serve to atone for all sins, His degree of suffering is deeper than that of any other person. Through His Life, Passion, Death and Resurrection, Christ merited for us all the graces we need not just to overcome trials and temptation but also to attain sanctity required for heaven. Meditation on Christ's Passion e.g. through the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary, and even short ejaculation prayer like "Passion of Christ, strengthen me!" is an effective and powerful way to get the graces we need for that difficult moment when we feel bereft of all strength. Christ's Passion is a bottomless treasury of graces for us to draw upon in any need.

Accepting all sufferings and glorifying God. God has a purpose for every trial or suffering He deems it necessary to send our way. Sometimes He may give us an insight into His ways. However, whether we understand the reason or not, we have the conviction of our faith that God is eternal wisdom and that everything that happens to us can be turned into eternal good for us and others (cf. Romans 8:28). Jesus and Mary are sinless but they endured untold suffering for the salvation of precious souls for the glory of God. Like Jesus and Mary, we can accept and surrender all our sufferings united to Christ's Passion to God through the united Hearts of Jesus and Mary, for the sake of His glorious Kingdom.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, my name is carved on Your hands (cf. Isaiah 49:16). Your right Hand holds me fast (Psalm 139:10). You promise to be with me every moment of my life and to be close when I am broken-hearted. I feel secure with You in me and around me. Give me the holy courage of my Blessed Mother Mary so that I can surrender to God all my sufferings united to Your Passion, to glorify God and to help save many souls. May Your Sorrowful Passion strengthen me always so that I can overcome all trials. Give me the grace to live in Your abiding presence always, and help me remember that You are close to me at the times when I need Your help. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.