

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 5:46-48)

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection ~ False Piety versus Holiness

It is God's will that you should be sanctified (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:3). The Lord desires holiness from every soul He created for each is made for the express purpose of final union with Him. For my final destination in God, I must strive daily to be more like Him and to let go more and more of my self-will, self-love and self-pride. How can I avoid pitfalls in my journey to holiness? To do this it is helpful for me to recognise what false piety is.

Minimalist piety. The chief flaw of the minimalist devotee is that she is contented with giving God the bare minimum and mistakenly thinks that she is doing well in her spiritual life. There is no fervour in her acts of piety and she does not detect this. The thought of increasing in holiness and growing closer to the Lord never occur to her for she thinks she is already doing more than enough. Despite the minimum she is offering, a minimalist devotee seldom thinks about receiving Holy Communion or Confession more often to please the Lord. On the other hand, a minimalist may even attend daily Mass but does so with lukewarmness and in a mechanical way so as to remain unchanged. **Significantly, the absence of a personal desire for perfection for the glory of God, as requested by our Lord, characterizes the minimalist devotee.** Even a fervent soul can have traits of minimalism: a small defect that she does not want to correct because she feels she has done enough and is satisfied. A minimalist's life is usually slothful, lukewarm and without enthusiasm.

The primary motivation of the minimalist devotee. A minimalist devotee is more motivated by her fear of going to hell than in pleasing the Lord. She has no deep understanding of the personal intense love that the Lord has for her. She has no time nor inclination to meditate on Christ's suffering and Passion. Worldly concerns occupy a higher priority, and her heart is over-burdened with things of this world. She may feel emptiness in her life but she probably will not attribute it to her shallow love for the Lord who loves her beyond her imagination and tried to win her love with His own Blood. To the minimalist devotee, God is a distant spirit who has the power to cast a soul into hell. **A significant lack in such a soul is a personal relationship with the Lord.** As the minimalist devotee prays so little, she seldom has the opportunity to put herself into God's presence. As such, she cannot feel God's presence in her life, and seldom discerns the action of God's Hand in her life. To such a soul the Lord says: *The smallest details in your life are of concern to me (cf. Matthew 10:30). I have loved you with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3). You are precious to Me (Isaiah 43:4). I call you friend (John 15:15).*

Piety without formation. This is the piety of a devotee with a deficient and superficial religious formation but who does not seek to deepen it. She has a shallow understanding of the truths of the faith but does nothing about it. In the spiritual realm, such a one will always remain a child, never maturing to an adult in faith. She does not understand the importance and eternal value of prayer, frequent Sacraments, a Mass devotedly attended or a Holy Communion well received. She does not understand the importance of Scripture in teaching how to live a good Christian life. She knows nothing about the exemplary lives of saints that can be emulated. Everything in her is chiefly directed by impressions, feelings, inclination, personal preferences or routine. Not having cultivated strong roots in faith, she either becomes enthusiastic with devotions or dislikes them for personal reasons. In her there is no proper order of everything according to the good norms and precepts taught by the Church. The Lord says: *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (cf. Hosea 4:6).*

Interested piety and inconstant piety. The devotee with interested piety only practises devotion for the chief purpose of her personal gain. Like the nine lepers who were healed, she disappears once she gets what she wants without having a thought of giving thanks and glory to God for the good that she has received. Such a one is more interested in the gift than in the Giver. The devotee with inconstant piety practises devotion without real perseverance. Her spiritual life is full of fits and starts without gaining spiritual fruits that last. She is distracted and has other higher priorities. *The Lord says: Seek first the kingdom of God then all things will be given to you (cf. Matthew 6:33).*

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, You desire and command holiness in my soul so that I may eventually be united with You in Heaven, my true home. Please illuminate my heart so that I maybe made aware of all falsehood that is hidden in it. I will not defend myself because I know You are love itself. Help me to remember that only in love and humility can I live in holy truth. Lord, let the intensity of Your love for me be the intensity of my desire to grow in holiness with sincere efforts and through the help of Your ever present grace. Just as You went way out for me and desire the best for me, may I also go way out to please You by sincere efforts to increase in personal holiness and to live a life of grace, imitating Your virtues and walking in Your footsteps. Mary, Protectress of our Faith, please unburden my heart and give strength to my resolutions. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.