

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Book of Psalms (*Psalms 95:1-2*)

Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord; cry out to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before Him with a song of praise, joyfully sing out our psalms. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection - Finding Joy in Prayer

Prayer puts us consciously into God's holy presence. God is always present to us but due to many distractions, we are not always present to Him. When we pray, we step consciously into God's loving presence. Though we may not feel it, it is a moment savored by our soul that yearns for the presence of the living God, its Maker. *As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When can I enter and see the face of God? (Psalm 42:2-3).* Our whole life on earth is a life-time of preparation for our soul to come into the full presence of God in heaven. Before attaining our beatific vision when we experience supreme blessedness and indescribable happiness when we see God face to face in heaven, how do we come more fully into God's presence and find real joy in prayer even here on earth?

Taking the time to be with God. God gives us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our time belongs to God. How much time we spend in prayer is a good indication of the importance we attach to our relationship with God. If we pray only when we are free, we can be sure God is not at the top of our priorities but there are false gods that are getting a lion's share of our time. Jesus is the perfect model for our life on earth. By His actions, Jesus teaches us the importance of having a solid prayer life. Jesus often withdrew by Himself to quiet places to pray (cf. Luke 5:16). We need quiet time, to be alone in order to communicate with God, heart to heart. We need to remove the distractions that destroy our quality time with God. Even in quiet places, distractions can come into our mind and heart. Sleepiness/tiredness/dryness are common weapons used by the enemy of our salvation to discourage prayer. Recalling the faults of others and inciting anger in our heart during prayer are other diabolical tools of Satan. We need to surrender all distractions to the Lord, and persist in our prayer.

Let our heart recall and dwell on God's love. Let God find our heart full of love and gratitude when we pray. Is there something God has done for us that touched our hearts? Let our heart open in love, and dwell on His acts of kindness. *Bless the Lord, my soul; and do not forget all His gifts (Psalm 103:2).* Once we forget what God has done for us, our love will slowly grow lukewarm. It is good to constantly recall the goodness of the Lord so that we can grow in our love for Him. It is often during our prayers that God transforms our heart and mind. True repentance of our sins and recalling God's goodness open our heart to receive His amazing graces. It is a good practice to start prayer with a small act of contrition. We take the opportunity during prayer to open our heart and let the Holy Spirit fill it with love for God. For this, we need to pray for the grace to love God as He loves us and the grace to fulfill His will every day. During prayer, let our heart dwell on the Passion of our Lord. During the quiet moments, let our heart understand how much the Lord went through in order that we can be with Him in heaven. Is there a saint that does not dwell on the Passion of the Lord? We are all saints in the making.

Praying with the heart. Saying what I mean and meaning what I say with love and devotion. Though we are gifted with numerous excellent structured prayers such as the holy rosary and Chaplet of Divine Mercy both of which provide a unique framework for meditating the life and Passion of our Lord and Blessed Mother Mary, spontaneous prayer will always have its own place in our prayer life. Whether it is a structured prayer or spontaneous prayer, we can pray as if each word is straight from the depths of our heart. Injecting a strong dose of praise into our prayers has a good uplifting effect on our souls. God is love, and our communication with Him should always be through the heart – sincere, simple, with much love and devotion. Thus, we need to pray with the heart. The value of our prayers will depend much on the love that is enfolded in the prayer.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You are the joy and desire of my soul. My soul yearns for You like a thirsty deer for water in the desert. In heaven when I possess the beatific vision, I will experience supreme blessedness and indescribable joy when I see You face to face. *For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12).* Help me to find joy in prayer by coming more fully into Your blessed presence. Enlighten my heart with a deep insight of Your love and give me the grace to love You as You love me. When my heart really understands how much You love me, I know I will be filled with joy in Your Presence. Help me live in Your holy presence which is the shortcut to holiness. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.