

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Philippians (*Philippians 3:7-9*)

[But] whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection - Letting go of all our bondages and baggage for the hope to which we are called

Letting go of attachment to self. Due to the Fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve, we have the natural tendency to sin which is generally termed “concupiscence.” Our lower self, the “flesh” tenders towards its own self-gratification and sin whilst the Spirit within us tries to uplift us to holiness which is our higher inherent calling. Everyone is prone to sin which hardens the heart and makes it prideful. Unless we are seriously committed to make God come first in our lives, the natural tendency is to elevate self above all else. Unresisted, this weakness can become an attachment, a baggage on our soul. Attachment to self, aided by the shallow values of our godless world, leads one to think only about oneself, cling tenaciously to one’s own opinions, be ever vigilant to protect and claim one’s rights and entitlements and be not open to advice or correction from others. The amount of time spent on an activity or person or thing reflects the amount of importance we attach to this. Do we live lives which revolve around ourselves with an inordinate amount of time spent on self: enriching oneself, pleasuring oneself, entertaining oneself, pleasing and amusing oneself, etc.? Instead, let us put God first in our lives.

Letting go of our hidden pride. The root of attachment to self is pride. Pride makes one cowardly. It magnifies inordinately the fear of human rejection. Pride makes one please oneself or others in order to look good in the eyes of others but is unafraid of offending God. Pride prevents one from doing the right thing if it does not meet with the approval of others. Through pride, one is driven by feelings and not by faith (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:7). Through pride, one places impossible burdens on the soul. Thus, we can feel empty and unfulfilled even if our lives are crammed with pleasurable activities. Our sins weigh us down. Jesus says: *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy, and My burden light.”* (*Matthew 11:28-30*). Jesus invites us to replace our yoke (our will, our passions, our desires) with His yoke (His divine will which is based on divine love and providence) so that we can find true happiness and rest for our souls. Through the power of God’s grace, we can transform our hearts to be meek and humble like that of Christ.

Letting go of our complacency. We live in times when unprecedented evil are being perpetrated throughout the world, and when the truths of our faith are increasingly opposed and rejected. More than ever, we can feel the urgency to live our faith with a strong and unyielding commitment commensurate with the Sacrifice that Christ endured for us on Calvary. Living a watered down version of our faith does not please God nor is inspiring to the unbelievers around us. Far from expecting us to be of the world and led by its false lights, Christ sets us apart to be its light and salt. We have to dare to be different in our adherence to Christ’s divine teachings. We have to be ever mindful of what our sins cost Christ, to abhor sin and never to take our salvation for granted. In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus explains that God will go all the way even to save one soul. Through our Baptism, we share the salvific mission of Christ to save souls. Let us all be filled with the zeal of Christ and fight valiantly as befitting the children of God to save many souls for God’s glorious Kingdom which is our inheritance.

Letting go of our woundedness, unforgiveness and the unhappy past. We have the power of God’s grace to choose happiness and a new beginning for ourselves. Happiness cannot be ours if we choose to cling to unforgiveness, woundedness and live in the unhappy past. Our own sins cannot be forgiven if we do not forgive others (cf. Matthew 6:15).

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, give me a deep insight into the greatness of the hope to which I am called and to understand that all earthly attractions are futile unless they draw me to You. As St Paul says: all things are rubbish compared to the surpassing worth of knowing You and being in You (cf. Philippians 3:8). Through Your Passion, release me and all sinners from all sinful bondages and uplift us to respond to God’s call to holiness. Transform our hearts and minds, and fill us with Your wisdom and humility. Anoint us with Your Holy Spirit so that we can overcome our selfishness, rise and witness to God’s truths through the way we live our lives. Mary, Mother of Salvation pray for us and help us keep our souls in the state of grace. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk