

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the first Letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection - Living a joyous life daily

Letting go of all bondages. Bondages of whatever kind, have an unhealthy hold over us and prevent us from being truly happy. Having an honest knowledge and acknowledgement of our bondages is a great grace. Bondages or obsession of any kind deny us of the true spiritual freedom we need in order to pursue holiness. In such a situation we are not living life fully as the power of God's grace cannot operate fully in our lives. There are many kinds of bondages: inability to forget the unhappy past, unceasing worries about the uncertain future, insatiable and impure desires of the flesh, unforgiveness, inordinate love of money, obsession over persons or things, obsession over aspects of oneself: appearance, health, etc.. God's gifts to us should not become more important than the Giver Himself, but should lead us closer to Him. Whatever that is more important to us than our allegiance to God and His divine will becomes a false god in His eyes. Whatever consumes an inordinate amount of our time, resources, thoughts but which does not lead us closer to God can become a bondage to our souls. Jesus comes to give us life, abundant life that is free of all bondages so that we can live fully in the power of His grace. Christ's promise to us is that if we place our allegiance to God as our topmost priority, He will supply all our needs (cf. Matthew 6:33).

Practising charity and self-control over our hearts, minds and tongues. *For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7).* Pursuing holiness is all about developing our character and living a life that is aimed at pleasing God and fulfilling His holy will. Good fruits can only be produced by good trees, and unhealthy trees can only give rise to bad fruits. We should vigilantly guard our heart that is so easily hardened by our indifference and sins. *With all vigilance guard your heart, for in it are the sources of life (Proverbs 4:23).* Due to concupiscence, the weakness of our mind can incline us to unloving or judgmental thoughts or constant recalling of someone's faults. If these negative thoughts are not controlled, they can produce words that hurt or offend, that do not build up people but lead them into the temptation of lashing back in self-defense. *No foul language should come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for needed edification, that it may impart grace to those who hear (Ephesians 4:29).*

Develop a solid prayer life and adopt a grateful attitude to God always (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). God gives us 24 hours in a day. How much we decide to give Him back the time required to develop our relationship with Him depends on ourselves. The amount of time we spend on prayer is a good indication of the importance we place on our relationship with God, our Heavenly Father. A grateful soul is a happy soul. However, there are many times when we are either blind to or take for granted the numerous blessings and favors God bestows on us. God cares and provides for us with the tenderness of a loving mother but how often do we feel grateful and thank God for His loving care? *Yet it was I Who taught Ephraim to walk, Who took them in My arms; but they did not know that I cared for them. I drew them with human cords, with bands of love; I fostered them like those who raise an infant to their cheeks; I bent down to feed them (Hosea 11:3-4).*

Focusing always on the Lord Who is our light and strength. St Paul teaches us many invaluable lessons. One of these is the constant focus on Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:2) and the attitude towards our weaknesses. Instead of despairing, St Paul says he is glad to bear his weaknesses because he knows that it is in weaknesses that Christ's glory can shine through (cf. 2 Corinthians 12: 8-10). Whatever weaknesses we may have or whatever difficult situation we may find ourselves in, we know that when we focus on Christ, we will be able to weather whatever storm that rages around us. However, when we are distracted by our fears and anxieties we will surely sink as St Peter did in the rough waves of the sea. Trust in God will cleanse our heart of unholy fears. *I have the strength for everything through Him who empowers me (Philippians 4:13).*

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, fill my poor heart with Your holy joy. There are so many things for me to rejoice over. You are the Lord of my life. I thank You with all my heart for this beautiful gift. Please enlighten the eyes of my heart to understand the greatness which belongs to the call of God to His chosen ones and the unsurpassed power of His grace that is available to us (cf. Ephesians 1:18-19). Free me from all bondages that deny me true freedom, forgive me all my sins, and lead me to live life fully in the power of Your grace, for nothing is impossible for You. Help me to look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:18). Mary, Refuge of holy love, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk