

Scripture Reading

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

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Prayer – the most amazing and powerful force on earth

Prayer is our most natural response in our assent to the truth of the existence of God. Our true self is created to render adoration and love to God, its Highest Good. Except when the soul is weakened and weighed down by sins, the body, heart, mind, soul and spirit act in natural harmony when a person opens up one's heart to pray to God. The deepest desire of the human heart and soul is union with its Highest Good. Until that happens, the heart is restless and nothing can truly satisfy it. *My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God (Psalm 84:2).* Thus, prayer which places us in the true reality of our position in the universe as creatures of God around whom our lives revolve is our most natural response once we assent to the truth of God's existence and His rightful dominion over the whole universe. Having no desire or inclination to pray is unnatural to our innermost being and is the work of the Enemy of our salvation.

Prayer forms the foundation of our loving relationship with God. Jesus teaches us to call God our Father. God our Father is not a distant spirit that has no time for or interest in our everyday lives but a father that is infinitely more caring than our earthly fathers. Even the number of hairs on our heads is recorded by our Heavenly Father (cf. Matthew 10:30). We need to establish a loving and loyal relationship with our Heavenly Father to Whom we owe everything. Prayer is our communication link with God. During His time on earth, Jesus was always slipping off to a quiet place to pray to the Father, showing us the importance of prayer. A loving relationship with God cannot exist without a constant and deep prayer life.

Whilst we cannot change ourselves and our situation, prayer can transform us and our situation. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing (cf. John 15:5). When we pray with a sincere heart, we open ourselves to the love and power of God. Dependent on the degree we cooperate with God's grace, any aspect of our life or person can be transformed: the body, mind, soul, spirit. In accordance with God's will, through prayer we can be cleansed of our sins, freed of any bondages, strengthened, healed and filled with the love and peace of God, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For God, nothing is impossible (cf. Luke 1:37). Prayer can transform hearts and minds, societies, countries, the whole universe. Everything is under the dominion of God's power.

Through prayer we can discern God's will better. Sometimes God's will in a particular situation may be difficult to discern especially when it is not a case of deciding between what is sinful and not sinful. Through prayer, God can enlighten our minds which may be darkened by selfishness, falsehoods or other demonic deception leading to the wrong way of thinking. Once God shines His light of truth on our minds we can recognize the darkness of our minds. Thus, through a change of way of thinking, we can see God's will - the true path ahead - more clearly. Through prayer, God can also purify our heart of pride, selfishness, unholy fears, anxieties, woundedness, evil desires and anything which does not come from God. With a cleansed heart, we are open to receive His love and graces and thus strengthened to discern His loving will and to carry it out.

Prayer can defeat evil and is necessary for our salvation. When the disciples of Jesus asked Him why they cannot drive out an evil spirit from a possessed person, Jesus answered that this kind of situation can only be driven out by prayer and fasting (cf. Mark 9:29). Whilst by ourselves we are no match for Satan, however, Satan is nothing more than a dust particle in the face of the power of God. When we pray and especially when we couple prayer with fasting, we set the stage for God's almighty power to act against the evil in the situation. Heart-felt prayer for an unrepentant person can change his/her eternal destiny as through our prayers and sacrifices God can soften and open the hardened heart to seek forgiveness and God's mercy.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, thank You for the gift of prayer. You taught us how to pray when You taught us the 'Our Father' prayer. Our first holy obligation is to render God our adoration, worship, praise and thanksgiving. In doing so, we are strengthened to do God's will that will guide us to walk on the true path. You teach us to ask for all our needs through prayer including forgiveness for our sins and deliverance from evil. Teach us to follow Your example to pray unceasingly till all Your beloved souls are safely united in Your Kingdom where You have prepared for us our glorious, eternal inheritance. Help us find joy in prayer, and grant that our whole life be a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to You, our Highest Good. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for us. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk