

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.

Reflection – Prayer will lead to our transformation and joy in the Lord

Prayer: our praise and thanksgiving to God. The deeper our insight into God's love for us, the more our heart will be open to glorify and praise Him. To lift our heart to render God the praise, adoration and thanksgiving due to Him, our heart need to be freed of its burdens especially sins. A heart that has forgiven and received forgiveness from God is free to sing its praises of its wonderful Creator. *Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! (Psalm 150:6)*. God's glory deserves our praise, His love, mercy and kindness deserve our unending thanksgiving. *All Your works praise You, Lord; Your faithful people extol You (Psalm 145:10)*. We are obliged to praise and glorify God. Let our prayers not be dominated by a list of wants but always start and end with thanksgiving and praise. Praise is an acceptable sacrifice to God (cf. Hebrews 13:15). The Lord shows us how to pray by teaching us the 'Our Father', a perfect prayer that first addresses our obligation to God followed by our human needs.

Prayer: seeking out God's will, the roadmap of our life. *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:33)*. God has a mission for each and every one of us. *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10)*. There is some definite good work which God has planned for each of us to do for His Kingdom, a unique work that can only be fulfilled by each of us. It is a sharing of Christ's divine mission. Through prayer and obedience to His teachings, we can discern God's plan for us and be given the graces to carry it out. St Paul exhorts us to use 'gold', 'silver' and 'costly stones' to build upon the foundation that is Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). We can do this if we allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit. However, if we are led by the spirit of the world, we will be chasing worldly pursuits and using wood, hay or straw upon the foundation.

Prayer: Bringing the saving and transforming power of God into our daily lives. Life can be more peaceful and joyful if we allow and invite God into our daily lives. Prayer brings us consciously into the presence of God. A young child feels confident and secure in the presence of its mother. In the same way, we feel less burdened by our problems once we unburden them to the Lord knowing that He is the person Whom we can absolutely trust. *Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28)*. God never refuses help to those who seek it of Him (cf. Matthew 7:11). The best gifts of God are those that transform our minds and hearts to be more Christ-like. When we open our heart to God in prayer, God frees us from the earthly bonds that make us slaves to earthly treasures, attunes our mind to His will, and develops in us virtues that will help us walk on the true path. It is a transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit Who can renew us in our attitudes and minds, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (cf. Ephesians 2:23-24).

Prayer: our way of life. Our relationship and friendship with God should be given the greatest importance in our lives if we want to be our true self, walking on the true path. Our prayer life reflects the kind of relationship we have with God. Jesus emphasizes the importance of prayer by His own living example. St Paul exhorts us to pray continually, saying this is God's will for us (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:17). It is a great temptation of the faithful to compartmentalize their prayer life. Thus, while a faithful seeks to make many retreats in a year, such a soul will not move a finger to correct his/her faults and vices. Such efforts will not bear much fruits. On the contrary, once a soul feels the comforting presence of God in prayer or during a retreat, such mountain-top experiences should not be sought only as a consolation but more importantly as a channel for God's graces to touch many and more areas of the daily life of the soul. We must live our faith if our faith is to remain alive.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, thank You for the gift of prayer and for showing me the importance of prayer. Give me the grace to be always ready to render You praise and thanksgiving together with all of nature and the whole heavenly court of saints and angels. Only the eternally damned is not able to praise You. Help me develop a sincere, constant and consistent prayer life so that my relationship with You grow more loving and trustful. Bestow upon us sinners the grace to seek not only Your gifts but more importantly Your divine presence which my soul craves and my inmost heart longs. May I always take the time and treasure Your Presence during my prayer. Transform me as You so wish during prayer. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk