

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Romans (*Romans 8:29*)

For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection - Raised up to be like Christ, to do His work, and to inherit His Kingdom

Our sanctification – we are being conformed to Christ’s image. Before Creation, God chose each of us for His divine purpose to do good works (cf. Ephesians 1:11). We were certainly not a biological ‘accident’ but each was brought forth by God at birth from our mother’s womb (cf. Psalm 71:6). God has given us, His children the gift of the Holy Spirit in Whom we live, move and have our being (cf. Acts 17:28). The gift of the Holy Spirit is God’s pledge or guarantee of our glorious eternal inheritance that is to come (cf. Ephesians 1:14). The Holy Spirit is with us always till the last moment of our lives. He works quietly and continuously within us to sanctify our soul and make it like Jesus so that we are fit for heaven, our true home, and also to equip us for the work God has prepared for us to do. Jesus says to us: *Be perfect as Your Heavenly Father is perfect* (cf. Matthew 5:48). Whatever God commands, He provides the corresponding amount of grace for it.

Allowing ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit in order to grow in holiness as is the will of God for us. Because of our fallen human nature, we are naturally inclined to sin. *Behold, I was born in guilt, in sin my mother conceived me* (Psalm 51:7). The Holy Spirit helps us exert control over our sinful selfish desires which run contrary to God’s loving will. He opens the eyes of our heart and mind to see the truth of God’s undying love, and gives us the wisdom to see His Hand in our daily lives. He gently prompts us with His holy inspirations as He illumines our mind and heart so that we walk on the true path of the Lord by adhering to His commandments and imitating His life on earth. Through the Holy Spirit, we gain a discernment of God’s will. The desires of the Holy Spirit and that of our sinful nature oppose each other as the Holy Spirit works towards the sanctification of our soul while our fallen nature tends towards the satisfaction of sinful, selfish desires of the flesh. St Paul says: *I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want* (Galatians 5:16-17). However, once we let the Holy Spirit lead us, we can overcome our sinful nature and do what God wants.

Allowing ourselves to be renewed every day in our heart and mind. Conversion is a daily renewal of our heart and mind by the Holy Spirit as He works quietly within us to make us conform to Christ’s image. The Holy Spirit leads us into a life of prayer and sacrifice imitating the life of Jesus on earth. The fruits of the Holy Spirit within us are manifested by our ardent love for God and everything God stands for, our loving adherence to His commandments, our seeking to please Him in all things, and zeal and passion for God’s Kingdom. *In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control* (Galatians 5:22-23). Without opening our heart to prayer and seeking God, not only would we not be able to hear the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, we would certainly lose our faith eventually. It is through prayer that God can soften our hardened, calloused heart and enlighten and correct our darkened mind. Deeper prayer leads to deeper action of God in our heart and mind. The strength of our faith depends much on our prayer life. It is not how much we pray but with how much love we pray. It is love that gives eternal value to all our actions. *Pray without ceasing* (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Once an action is done out of love for God, it becomes a beautiful prayer to God.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, I bless and thank You for creating me out of nothing for Your grand purpose: that I may be conformed to Your image, empowered by Your grace to continue Your work of sanctifying the world and to be a co-heir to Your glorious Kingdom. Through my Baptism, I have a unique share in Your kingship, priesthood and prophethood. *But you are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of His own, so that you may announce the praises” of Him Who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light* (1 Peter 2:9). Yes, I was born to announce God’s praises and to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to others through the way I live my life. Give me a greater indwelling of Your Spirit so that Your desires become my desires and Your will becomes my will. Help me be fruitful like You so that our Heavenly Father is glorified. You are the Vine and I the branch. I desire a greater union with You and I consecrate my heart, mind and soul to Your Sacred Heart through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Let everything I think of, say and do be for Your greater glory. Your Sacred Heart is consumed with zeal and passion for God’s Kingdom. Make my heart be aflame like Yours! Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.