

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (*Matthew 16:26*)

What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life?

The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection - The price of a soul to God

The mission of Jesus is to save souls. Jesus died a cruel death on the cross, shedding His Blood to save souls, as decreed by God, the Heavenly Father. It was not for any other purpose. It was not to save fallen angels. It was not to save the environment even as it is a popular and politically correct cause in recent times. The Church exists to help Jesus save souls for God's Kingdom. This is the highest mission on the face of the earth. This is because there is nothing on earth that is more precious to God than one single soul. *No man can ransom even a brother, or pay to God his own ransom (Psalm 49:8)*. This lofty mission is entrusted to the Church as a whole and to believers individually (cf. *Matthew 28:19-20*). When Jesus heals a sick person, He heals the soul first as health of the body and soul is deeply interconnected. Jesus lets the disciples know what He was doing. When the people brought Him a paralytic lying on a stretcher, He said to the paralytic, "Courage, child, your sins are forgiven." (cf. *Matthew 9:2*). Forgiveness of sins is vital for the health of the soul. After telling the paralytic his sins were forgiven, Jesus proves to the people that He indeed has the divine power to forgive sins by performing a miracle when He said to the paralytic: "Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home" (cf. *Matthew 9:6*).

The value of one soul is worth more than the whole physical world (cf. *Matthew 16:26*). When in Gadarene territory Jesus healed the two men possessed by demons and allowed the demons to go into the herd of swine feeding nearby, causing them to rush down the slope and be drowned, the people of that area asked Him to leave. To them the cost of the great number of pigs drowned was simply too much for them to bear even when two men were healed in the process! Without divine wisdom, they did not understand that there is nothing in the whole universe that is more precious to God than a single soul. It is the soul that makes us human (cf. CCC364). Animals have no soul. Each of us is made up of a body and a soul so profoundly united that the union of the two gives us not two natures but a human nature (cf. CCC365). The mortal body is created by God through the reproductive power of our parents but the soul which is immortal is a direct gift and creation by God (cf. CCC366). The soul is the part of us that bears the image of God the most. At Baptism it is filled with sanctifying grace of God. The soul is the seat of our intellect, will, conscience, and memory. Our soul only separates from our body at death, and will be reunited with our glorified body at final Resurrection (cf. CCC366). *St. Catherine of Siena said to her Confessor priest: "Had you, my father confessor, beheld the beauty of one soul adorned with grace, you would certainly for the sake of one such soul, gladly suffer death a thousand times."* Sanctifying grace, a free gift from God, imparts to the soul supernatural beauty, light and life.

God will do His utmost to save even just one soul. In the parable of the lost sheep (cf. *Matthew 18:12-13*) Jesus shows us that God will try to save a soul as if He has only that soul. Each soul is so precious to God that He will try to save that lost soul without any considering any cost. And this is what He did when our first parents Adam and Eve fell from grace. The Incarnation of Christ, God's only begotten Son when He assumed lowly human flesh to become like one of us, and His submission to a cruel death on the Cross of crucifixion are unsurpassed great acts of charity by God that demonstrate beyond a shadow of doubt God's love for us and the price of our souls. *He (God) who did not spare His own Son but handed Him over for us all, how will He not also give us everything else along with Him? (Romans 8:32)*. St Paul reminds us that God has already done everything as far as our eternal welfare is concerned. God has already handed over His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ to be the Sacrifice for our sins. God lamented through Prophet Isaiah: *What more could be done for My vineyard that I did not do? (Isaiah 5:4)*. God has given us free will and He will not force His salvation on us. Instead, we are asked to respond to His call to become His adopted children through Jesus Christ. What a great call! What bright destiny awaits us!

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, to make my soul fit to stand in the presence of God, You left Your throne in heaven and assumed lowly human flesh to become one like us and submitted to a shameful agonizing death on the cross of crucifixion. Through Your Passion, You gained for me all the graces needed to make me fit to be a child of God. Through the graces imparted by Your Spirit, all my sins are remitted, my soul is made fit to partake of Your righteousness, and thus, I can stand in front of God fully justified as if I had never sinned! Yes, You have wrought my perfect redemption and salvation. Every fibre of my being is filled with love and gratitude for the greatness of the work You have done in my soul, which is far greater than Your work at Creation! I gladly live to sing Your praises all the days of my life. Mary, Mother of Salvation, help me keep my soul always in the state of grace. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk