

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (*Matthew 5:29-30*)

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – The worst thing on earth

Our sins nail Jesus to the Cross. After Jesus taught His disciples on the beatitudes, He gave them a stark lesson on sin. His strong emphasis on the gravity of sin come across very clearly when He said it is better we do away with that part of our body that causes us to sin! It is a startling lesson for us. Yet, we are aware that Jesus knows exactly what He was talking about. Scripture tells us that it is only against God that we sin. *Against You, You alone have I sinned; I have done what is evil in Your eyes so that You are just in Your Word, and without reproach in Your judgment (Psalm 51:6).* The gravity of sin is so great in God's eyes that only the Precious Blood of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ can atone for the sins committed by the human race. Thus, heaven was closed to even the just people who died before the first coming of Christ, and only opened after Jesus died on Calvary as a Sacrifice to atone for the sins of all humankind.

The only thing that separates us from God. *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).* There is absolutely nothing in existence or to come into existence in this physical or spiritual world that has the power to stop the love of God that He has for every one of His children. Satan cannot separate us from God. Nor can death. The only thing that can separate us from God's love is unrepented sin which in reality is a rejection of God's love. God is love, and His commandments are based on love. Out of love, He created us; out of love, He redeems us at great sacrifice and personal cost.

Sin hardens our heart. It is extremely difficult to have a deep contrition for our sins when we do not understand the gravity of sin in God's eyes. Most of the time, sin does not cause us to feel the horror we should feel for a number of reasons. We missed the gravity of sin when we judge the seriousness of the sin according to the feeling it invokes in us but not according to the distance the sin separates us from God. Thus, it is very important that our conscience is properly formed and shaped by the immutable truths of our faith so that we do not operate out of subjective feelings and pride but out of pure and simple faith. *Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children (Luke 23:28).* Yes, we do well to weep for our sins and the sins of others that put Christ on the Cross and cause Him suffering even now. God is just: for every sin, there is a debt. And it is Jesus who pays the debt through His Blood and sufferings. We are called to repent of every sin we commit. Thus, the first and last topic of Jesus' preaching on earth is repentance. With frequent and sincere repentance especially through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we can keep our soul in a state of grace and maintain our close relationship with God.

Sin blinds us. *Sin directs the heart of the wicked man; his eyes are closed to the fear of God. For he lives with the delusion: his guilt will not be known and hated (Psalm 36:2).* Our sins blind us to the holy fear of God and give us the false boldness that we have nothing to be afraid of in the presence of God. When we are not vigilant against sin, take our faith for granted and feel no urgency to response to God's call to holiness, it is extremely easy to trivialize and get used to sin, make justification for ourselves and to tolerate its ugly presence in our precious soul. Thus, St Paul says: *Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).*

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You detest sin because it is a rejection of Your love and the only thing that separates us from You. Yet, You love me despite my sins. Give me the grace to understand the horror that sin is in the eyes of God, and to never tolerate its ugly presence in my soul. Help me meditate on Your Passion frequently so that I will have a good understanding of what my sins cost You. Rid me of my pride that trivializes sin and which makes false justification for me. Form my conscience in the immutable truths of my faith so that I can discern what is sinful even when it comes camouflaged in goodness. Fill my heart with holy love and humility which is a strong protection against temptation. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk