

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to St Luke (Luke 9:23-25)

Then He said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?" The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – We are called not to conquer the highest peak but to gain mastery over ourselves

More than a competing athlete. *Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one (1 Corinthians 9:25).* Jesus opens the door of His heavenly Kingdom to everyone. However, only those who have proven themselves true disciples will be fit to enter the gates of Paradise. Jesus sets high standards of condition for those who wish to follow after Him. The Kingdom of God will be difficult to be attained by those who are lukewarm or complacent or do not wish to struggle hard and strive daily for their salvation. St Paul reminds us that we must work even harder than a competing athlete who trains for hours every day because our stakes are much higher.

Walking in the footsteps of Jesus means carrying our own crosses daily. Each soul's cross is different from that of others. Whatever the shape of the cross, to be able to carry it, requires the first step of renouncing ourselves so that we are open to God's loving will and His commandments which are given to us to guide us on the true path. Renouncing ourselves will hardly be easy. The concupiscence in our body tends towards sin whilst the Holy Spirit in us prompts us to strive for grace. *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 5:17).* In any attempt to grow in holiness, there is always an internal struggle to overcome our sinful inclination. Even St Paul lamented that there were times he was not able to do the things he wanted to do but instead did the things he did not want to do. However, no matter how many times we fall, we should keep in mind that God's grace is always available to us to strengthen us to do whatever He calls us to do. Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more (cf. Romans 5:20). We are never alone in our attempts to grow in holiness.

Renouncing the worldly way we think. *The concern of the flesh is death, but the concern of the Spirit is life and peace. For the concern of the flesh is hostility toward God; it does not submit to the law of God, nor can it and those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:6-8).* A weak mind not governed by the Spirit is easily deceived by the Enemy of our Salvation. A weak mind is open to the subtle suggestions of lies and falsehoods that Satan is busy promoting in human minds for this is a very important area of the battlefield for souls. Many souls are lost through the erroneous and sinful way they think and act. Satan cunningly uses many ways including the media to his great advantage to corrupt human thinking. Our protection against demonic deception is to live in the truths of Christ. To do this, we must know His teachings and Word, let it form our hearts and minds, and make it the guiding principle of our daily life.

Overcoming our feelings and senses. What we sense and feel, for the most part, does not reflect the true situation. Hence, St Paul exhorts us to walk by our faith and not by our senses. *For we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).* To be led by faith and not by our senses, we need to put our heart right with God. Unruly passion of the heart has been the cause of the fall of many souls from grace. A clean and simple heart makes for a clean soul. A prideful heart makes for a prideful soul. *With all vigilance guard your heart, for in it are the sources of life (Proverbs 4:23).* The best protection to give our heart is to let love and humility take control over it. A humble soul will not be easily tempted by unforgiveness or pride. When one is strong in the virtue of love and humility, one can keep one's passion and feelings under holy control.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, during Your time on earth, You gave us a sterling example on how to carry our crosses meritoriously. Though You were God, You did not cling to this truth but instead emptied Yourself to take the form of humanity and were obedient to our Heavenly Father even to death on the cross (cf. Philippians 2:6-8). Without Your grace, I will not be able to carry my cross. Through Your sorrowful Passion, give me the will and the grace to embrace my cross and the strength to carry it joyfully and lovingly in the knowledge that it is the only road to my eternal crown of glory. I consecrate to You my mind. Please purify it of all worldly wisdom and anything which does not come from You. Fill it with Your divine light, truth and uncreated wisdom. I consecrate to You my heart. Please purify it and fill it with Your love and humility. Mary, Mother of Salvation, please intercede for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.