

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Book of Deuteronomy (*Deuteronomy 7:6*)

For you are a people holy to the LORD, your God; the LORD, your God, has chosen you from all the peoples on the face of the earth to be a people specially His own. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – We are no ordinary people, we are a people set apart for God

God calls us to holiness as He Himself is holy. *To Me, therefore, you shall be holy; for I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from other peoples to be My own (Leviticus 20:26).* In the Jewish language, when something is repeated twice, it signifies importance and high priority but when it is repeated thrice, the very strong emphasis on its importance cannot be ignored. Holiness is the only attribute of God thrice repeated in Scripture as in “holy, holy, holy” (cf. Isaiah 6:3, Revelation 4:8). Thus, we can reasonably conclude that holiness is absolutely the greatest attribute of God. The Hebrew word for holy is “qodesh” which means “apartness, set-apartness, separateness, sacredness”. It is uncommon, set apart from the ordinary and profane as it is sacred. It is really in a class of its own. The godless and the worldly disdain and deride holiness because they cannot lift their thoughts and minds above the things of this world. However, holiness is our true, inherent nature because our divine Creator is holy and He made us to be holy like Him. Thus, holiness is our true calling no matter how sinful we may have fallen.

God calls us to holiness as He has set us apart to be His own special possession (cf. Deuteronomy 7:6, Leviticus 20:26). This is not because of anything we have done but it is according to His own purpose and grace even before the foundation of the world (cf. 2 Timothy 1:9). Through our Baptism we were each consecrated to God i.e. set aside to be holy and to belong to God. Through Baptism, we were marked with a permanent, indelible spiritual mark signifying that we belong to Christ. Through Baptism, we were “incorporated in” and “configured to” Christ (cf. CCC 1272). Thus, when we are finally presented to God the Father in heaven on the last day, we must be like other “Christ”, standing in the righteousness of Christ.

To be holy is to stand in the righteousness of Christ. *For our sake He made Him to be sin Who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).* The soul pursuing holiness recognizes the battle between good and evil in one’s heart. Through a conscience formed and molded by God’s Word, divine teachings and Commandments, one is able to discern what is evil even though it may come camouflaged in goodness. Jesus said: *“If you remain in My Word, you will truly be My disciples, and you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32).* Adherence to God’s Word, Commandments and teachings will enable us to know God’s truths, to remain in His Truth and to be set free from the slavery of sin. God’s commandments are based on love of God and of others. Thus, holy love is the embrace of God’s commandments. Holy, unselfish love is the criterion we use in judging and controlling our thoughts, words, behaviour, and aspirations. The embrace of God’s Commandments, Word and teachings leads us into His divine Will. Holiness entails living in the present moment, and our moment-by-moment choices are a reflection of the extent of our love for God and others.

To be holy is to have the heart and mind of Christ. To have the heart and mind of Christ is to share His desires, to love what He loves, to see things from His perspective, to feel as He feels, to detest what He detests, and to share His ardent love for God and for souls. Holiness grows from an interior life of prayer, sacrifices, penance and good works. Christ’s life of self-emptying and sacrifice on earth is a source of strength and a model to emulate. To give indispensable help to souls to gain holiness, Christ bestowed His Sacraments on His Church. Sacraments impart sanctifying grace which increases the holiness of the soul and actual grace which gives inner strength to follow the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Thus, a newly baptized baby is holy even if it has not done any good deed. Holiness also entails discerning evil and fighting it in us and around us, defending our faith and witnessing to the Truth whenever necessary. It embraces the salvific mission of Christ in saving souls through prayers, sacrifices, penance, good works and the offering of our entire selves including the will as a living sacrifice to God, making of ourselves His instruments of righteousness.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, to be holy is to be conformed to my true nature made in God’s image. I come from God and am returning to God. Holiness will make me fit for Heaven, my true home. Through Mary’s Heart Most Pure, I consecrate to You my mind, heart, body and soul. Anoint me with Your Holy Spirit. Help me heed faithfully the gentle inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Give me the grace to live fully in the present moment in Your holy Presence, and an ardent devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the shortest route to Your Sacred Heart. Fill me with Your love so that I can love God and others as He loves me. Fill me with Your wisdom and humility so that I can always walk on Your true path. Mary, Mother of Salvation, make me holy like you! Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk