

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the first Letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection - We have the power to choose happiness in every situation

God wants us to be happy. Which parent will not do anything to bring happiness and joy to one's child? Thus, St Paul exhorts us to rejoice always. Always? Yes, always. St Paul knows we have every solid reason to rejoice always. But where do we look for happiness? What makes us truly happy? Paradoxically, if we place our own happiness over the interests and welfare of others, we will find ourselves miserable and unfulfilled creatures at the end of the day. Many people do not have real joy and peace in their inmost being. They seek relentlessly some temporal and sensual pleasure in other people or created things. Many souls do not understand true happiness comes from a loving relationship with God Who is the only source of all true love, joy, and peace. God made us to be happy in Him. He wants to give us His all and He wants to be our all!

To be truly happy, our soul must be in a state of grace. When a soul is not in a state of grace, it is in bondage to Satan who will try his utmost to make us unhappy and drag us into hell ultimately. When a soul is in the state of grace, it has the freedom to choose to do the right thing, to love and adore God, to grow in holiness and enjoy a loving relationship with God. It has inner peace and harmony, with a heart that is open to receiving God's grace. With God's powerful grace, something which is difficult to achieve by human standards can be overcome (cf. Philippians 4:13). Thus, the lives of true Christians should be very different from that of non-believers. With every command God gives, He gives the corresponding amount of grace to adhere to the teaching. With God's grace, we can, if we want to, forgive and even love our enemies. Thus, the path to holiness is the same path to true happiness. Hence, Jesus tells us: be holy as Your Heavenly Father is holy (cf. Matthew 5:48).

To retain our peace, we must be overcomers through God's grace. Life is beset with myriads of problems. When one is resolved, another one or two will crop up. God is constantly testing our faith and trust in Him. It is only in difficulties and trials that a person can show one's true character and prove one's faith in God. *For whom the Lord loves, He disciplines; He scourges every son He acknowledges (Hebrews 12:6).* We must be made fit and endure many hardships in order to enter heaven. God is always ready to help us with His grace. *We are afflicted in every way, but not constrained; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed (2 Corinthians 4:8).*

Through, God's grace, we have the power to choose happiness. True happiness and peace elude us if we choose to pursue a life that is devoid of God, or if we are content to remain in a state of mortal sin, or if we do not place our trust in God in the midst of difficulties and tribulation. We are in possession of the truth that only God can give true joy and happiness. Through God's grace, we have the power to seek first the kingdom of God and claim God's promise that all things we need will be given to us (cf. Matthew 6:33). Through God's grace, we have the power to seek holiness for our souls as commanded by our Lord. Through God's grace, we can overcome anxiety, worries and despair in the face of adversity and tribulation by choosing to place all our trust in God, and letting God be God. Through our trust in God, we will not be like a leaf that flutters and trembles with every passing breeze. We have the power through God's grace to choose happiness in any situation, knowing that God will give us all the graces we need to overcome any difficulty He sends us. As St Paul tells us: In Christ, we are more than conquerors (cf. Romans 8:37).

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You tell us through St Paul to rejoice always. Despite being laden with sins and weaknesses, nevertheless, help us to focus always on Your selfless, merciful love, the infinite power of Your might, the greatness of our calling to be Your children and the glorious, eternal inheritance You have prepared for us. Open our hearts to receive all the graces we need to overcome any adversity or difficulty in our life. Help us to remember always that You can turn any trial or tribulation into something that is good for us (cf. Romans 8:28). Thus, help us always to overcome despair and hopelessness through our increased trust in God, His goodness, His providence, mercy and power. Help us hold firm to the truth that You are the deepest desire of our heart and soul, and that to be happy, we need to be holy like You. Strengthen us to respond to Your call to holiness with alacrity and firm commitment. Thus, we can rejoice in whatever situation life has to offer. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for us. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.