

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to Luke (Luke 6:36)

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection - We must practise a virtue in order to be stronger in it

Through His own example Jesus teaches us to be merciful and compassionate. The teaching of Jesus comes through convincingly because His whole life on earth is a living example of all the values and virtues He teaches. Having always the welfare of others on the top of His mind, Jesus made Himself available to all who sought Him out. He administered to the crowds even when He was tired and had already retired to a place of rest. Jesus laid His hands to heal all the sick brought before Him, healing even on the day of the Sabbath and incurring the criticism of some legalistic Jews. Jesus did not make any pre-condition for healing. However, miracles could not be performed on those who were without faith. Even on the Cross just moments before He died, when His whole Body was in searing pain, the salvation of souls remained topmost in His mind. In words that cost Him agonizing efforts and great pain to utter, Jesus not only gave His attention to the poor repentant thief and forgave Him but also promised him heaven, and bestowed the priceless gift of His Mother Mary on the whole of mankind through St John at the foot of the Cross. In His last moments, the dying Jesus used His last breath and ounce of energy to plead for mercy and forgiveness for all sinners from God, the Father: *"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."* (Luke 23:34). Such is our merciful Saviour Who is worthy of all our love!

Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of Mine, you did for Me (Matthew 25:40). This is one of the most amazing promises of God that whatever action we render to others is counted as done to God Himself! Because of this promise, an extremely difficult thing to do such as to forgive a grievous hurt becomes much easier as it does away with all the reasons that prevent one from doing so. Through this divine teaching, all our way of thinking in regards to justice and worthiness becomes superseded by Christ's teaching on mercy when He personally identifies with those most in need of our mercy whom in human eyes may not necessarily be worthy of receiving any mercy. The teaching of Christ changes entirely the way of our thinking, our attitudes, our desires, our behaviour, our lives.

Practising mercy in our mind and thoughts. Due to our fallen, sinful nature, our minds are inclined to unloving thoughts such as judging others, dwelling on the faults of others, impure thoughts, angry thoughts, anxiety or worry, etc. These unloving thoughts were planted into our minds by the Evil One as sources of temptation. Half the battle against this temptation is won when we can recognize the origin of these bad thoughts and reject them by ignoring them, and offering a mental prayer for the subject of the bad thoughts. Our fight against temptation of our mind becomes more effective if we can counter the unloving thought with an appropriate verse from Scripture. For example, if our mind dwells on angry thoughts, we can proclaim to ourselves an appropriate Scripture verse such as: *for the wrath of a man does not accomplish the righteousness of God (James 1:20)*. We can unleash the hidden power of God's Word, by proclaiming to ourselves the appropriate verse and allowing ourselves to be led by it in faith. In this way, we can achieve a greater control over our mind set and thought pattern. Let us glorify God by surrendering our mind to Him and beautify it by meditating on Christ's sorrowful Passion, a spiritual exercise for everyone who loves Christ. God has given us all the graces we need to exert holy control over our thoughts and mind. *For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7)*.

Merciful actions can only arise from a merciful heart. *With all vigilance guard your heart, for in it are the sources of life (Proverb 4:23)*. All the divine teachings of God is to raise us up to be like Christ (cf. Romans 8:29), to have His heart and mind and to be fruitful like Christ in good works that have been prepared in advance for us to do (cf. Ephesians 2:10). Only in union with Christ can we bear any fruits that in God's eyes are pleasing and that can last. *I am the Vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in Me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without Me you can do nothing (John 15:5)*.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, help me to be merciful like You. Purify my mind of all wrong way of thinking, falsehoods, biases and prejudices. Flood my mind with God's light, truth and wisdom. Guard it against judging other people and unloving thoughts. Purify my heart of all hatred, unforgiveness, grudges, hurts and ill-intentions. Through my Blessed Mother, I surrender to You my heart, mind and soul so that I can grow in maturity in faith in order that I maybe conformed to Your image and be fruitful like You. Help me practise mercy and all the virtues that You teach me so that I can become stronger in them and help You in Your mission of salvation of all souls. Mary, Mother of Salvation, model of holiness, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.