

Scripture Reading

A reading from the Book of Genesis (*Genesis 4:6-7*)

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection ~ sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it (*Genesis 4:7*)

The devil is like a hungry lion prowling around for someone to devour (cf. 1 Peter 5:8). Satan works hard at tempting souls and never passes up an opportunity to trip up a soul into sin. *Remember that the devil doesn't sleep, but seeks our ruin in a thousand ways (St. Angela Merici)*. Satan was a fallen head angel and still possesses his powers given to him by God. Without God's grace, we are no match for Satan whose only mission is to get us all into hell. He knows our every weaknesses and uses them with great cunning to plan our downfall from grace. Thus, St Peter warns us to be vigilant against temptation as though it is like a hungry lion waiting to devour someone. We should know our own weaknesses and be very vigilant in these areas.

Harbouring unforgiveness, hatred and bitterness in our hearts. The easiest way for evil to enter the human heart is if the heart is full of hatred and unforgiveness. Such a soul is vulnerable and easily accept as true many accusations and falsehoods that the devil will plant in its mind especially regarding the target of the hatred. Hatred and unforgiveness is like a spiritual cancer which, if not got rid of, is certain to lead to the spiritual death of the soul. *But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins (Matthew 6:15)*.

Attachment to self. Attachment to self goes against God's commandment to love God above all with our entire heart, mind, soul and strength, and then to love others as ourselves (cf. Matthew 22:37). It is like a type of idolatry. It could be an unhealthy attachment to our self-importance, our opinion, our career, our achievements, our wealth, our looks, our intellect, our reputation, our security and comfort, our loved ones, our health, our possessions, what others think about us, etc. It is also about trusting ourselves too much. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5)*. We cannot see our souls as God sees it. Blinded by our hard-heartedness, we fail to recognize the sins in our soul. *In their own eyes they flatter themselves too much to detect or hate their sin (Psalm 36:2)*. King Herod felt threatened and insecure at the news of the birth of Baby Jesus that he ordered the massacre of all new born baby boys. Pontius Pilate was full of insecurity at the thought that the public opinion would be turned against him that he agreed against his conscience to condemn Jesus to death. Judas Iscariot was so taken up by his love for material wealth that his heart was closed to the great torrents of grace that come with being near to Jesus. A soul has to contend against three key enemies: the devil, the attractions of the world, and himself / herself (pride). The greatest of these is oneself. Thus, Jesus said: Deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow Me (cf. Luke 9:23). The greatest challenge in one's spiritual life is trying to learn to detach from oneself to truly walk in the footsteps of Jesus. Knowing who our real enemies are and our weaknesses is half the battle won.

Sin begets sin. *Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character (1 Corinthians 15:33)*. Flirting with temptation is like playing with fire. Satan will always engage his tactics in a cunning, subtle way. Just as God has a plan of salvation for all souls, so too Satan has a plan of eternal ruin for all souls. He is patient and will start with small, seemingly harmless temptations. However, once we start trivializing our faults, getting used to them and developing a cavalier attitude towards our salvation, we make our soul vulnerable and open the door for Satan to tempt us in bigger ways. *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it (Matthew 7:13)*.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You allow me to be subjected to temptation in order that I may prove my faith and strengthen it. Whatever temptation I may encounter, You provide a corresponding amount of grace for me to overcome it. You Yourself were tempted when You were at Your weakest in the desert for 40 days without food. The devil had to leave quietly when You proved Your faith and trust in the Heavenly Father. Please show me all the weaknesses in my character so that I may work at overcoming them with Your grace. Humble my prideful spirit. Guard my mind with Your holy truths, my heart with Your holy love and my soul with the grace of great horror of sin. May I treasure always Your promise of salvation which You won for me through the shedding of Your own Precious Blood. Bestow upon my soul a great love for God and for His holy truths so that I may be fortified against the deceit of Satan. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.