

Scripture Reading

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

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – God wants us to be joyful always

What is true joy? True joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. Galatians 5:22). It is the result of grace dwelling within the soul. Unlike earthly happiness, true joy is not based on circumstances which can change. Thus, earthly happiness is temporary and fragile. For instance, people are happy because of something happening. Some people need other people in order to be happy. Others need things in order to be happy. Is it a wonder then that so many people are unhappy?

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Philippians 4:4). To rejoice is to be joyful again and again. The Lord is the infinite source of true joy as He is the infinite fountain of grace. True joy does not need any earthly circumstance or reason. It comes purely as a free gift from the Lord. But we need to ask for this gift. Just as we ask the Lord to remove sins and darkness from our hearts, we need to ask daily for the gift of joy and light of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord loves a cheerful giver (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:7). God is love and light. Accordingly, He wants us to present His face to others around us especially those who have yet to establish a personal relationship with Him. Even when we are involved in some sacrifices or mortification which may stress our bodies the Lord says: Wash your face, comb your hair (cf. Matthew 6:17). Joy lightens every fatigue and burden, makes the sacrifice more sincere and precious, and Truth more acceptable and attractive to non-believers. How can we present a glum face to non-believers if we claim to be followers of Jesus, the Lord of Joy? God's unending joy has to pass through us to others who do not accept Him.

What reasons do we have to be joyful? In this troubled world of today, many things are happening which pull down the human spirit. It is easy to grow pessimistic and gloomy. It is precisely in trying times such as these that we need to hold firmly to the foundation of our faith. The world will continue to divert from the true path and increasingly, the morals and values of our faith will continue to be rejected, scorned and mocked at. Increased persecution down the road is expected as elites in advanced Western societies increasingly pit their influence and power at undermining the values and truths of our religion especially in regards to homosexuality, abortion and chastity. In the midst of it all, we need to live the truth that we came from God, created out of love by God who wants to make us His children. So precious are we that God did not balk at sending His Son Jesus to redeem us through His Blood on the Cross. We are called to cherish the truths of our faith and hold them very close to our heart (cf. Matthew 6:21, Luke 12:34). We are called to be joyful because our good Lord is God and there is no other (cf. Deuteronomy 32:39).

God's rewards to those who love Him. St. Paul tells us: No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human mind has conceived - the things God has prepared for those who love Him (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9). He further tells us that our sufferings are nothing compared to the glory we will experience in heaven (cf. Romans 8:18). In God we have all the reasons to rejoice: we have a great beginning and will have a great ending. In between while we are in this valley of tears, the Lord assures us of His ever-abiding presence at our side, His ever-ready help and ever-lasting love.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, You are the unending source of true joy. You teach me that to be joyful I must be focussed on the things of heaven. Nothing on earth can give real, lasting joy. So wondrous is the glory in heaven of those who love You that You say to me: jump with joy when people persecute you because of My sake (cf. Matthew 5:11-12). Lord, I trust in Your promise because You alone are the Absolute Unchanging Truth. Whenever I become despondent, please help me put on the spirit of thankfulness and joy so that whatever my trials and problems I can remain in Your supernatural joy. Mary, Protectress of the Faith, intercede for me. Thank You Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.