

Scripture Reading

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

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection ~ It is a privilege and joy to be able to pray

Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer is so important that God exhorts us to do it without ceasing. Every thought, word or deed can become a prayer to God if we unite our will with God's divine will and do everything for His glory. Blessed indeed we will be if we can do this for then we will be living in God's Kingdom though we are still on earth awaiting our purification. *Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst."* (Luke 17:20-21).

Prayer opens us up to true reality. When we pray we come consciously into the presence of God. We leave behind us our narrow false world revolving around our interests and those nearest and dearest to us. In prayer we acknowledge our sins and are reminded of the truth that we are sinners no matter how highly we may think of ourselves. When we open our hearts to praise God and render thanksgiving for His goodness, we step into the world of God acknowledging His sovereignty over us, His steadfast love and boundless mercy and His Providence in every situation of our life. It is a world of true reality although visible only to the eyes of faith. *For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them* (Matthew 13:15).

Prayer softens our heart and opens us to God's will. *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight* (Proverbs 3:5-6). Unrepented sins harden our heart and shut us off from God's graces which flow to us in every present moment. We grow stronger in our self-will and weaker in our virtues. Unrepented sins cut us more and more from God's blessings. Prayer does the reverse. Sincere prayer opens up the heart to God, and the Holy Spirit is able to pour God's love into the heart. With sincere prayer, our love for God can increase, flowing down to greater love for others.

Prayer is the most natural act of our soul as it continues the act of submission to God. *My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God* (Psalm 84:2). The delight of our soul is to worship God. Jesus exhorts us to be meek and humble (cf. Matthew 11:29). To be blameless before God we need to walk in obedience and humility every day of our lives. We have to continue submitting ourselves before God in order to empty ourselves of all that is unholy and worldly so that we can become our true selves filled with and made in the image of God. Our true mission: *My soul glories the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour* (Luke 1:46-47).

Prayer brings us peace and holds the key to salvation. *Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid* (John 14:27). Through prayer and surrendering all our problems to Jesus, we can avail of Christ's peace - the true peace that the world does not know of. We cannot grow in faith and love if we do not pray. *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it* (Proverbs 4:23). Without constant prayer, our hearts will be filled with our own desires and passions. We will be blind to our own weaknesses and faults. We will find it hard to live in the presence of God and to trust in Him. We will rely more and more on our own power and understanding. Our faith will not be built on rock but sand and will fail us when faced with trials and persecution.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, thank You for the gift of prayer. You are just a prayer away, ever close You are to my heart. It is a joy and privilege to be able to pray to You. It is my lifeline to You who are available to me every moment of the day through prayer. Help me to be sincere in my prayer, pouring myself out to You when I pray. May every beat of my heart be an act of love and adoration as I unite my praise and worship to that of the Immaculate Heart of Mary so that I can share in Her inestimable merits You have graced Her with. Lord, make my whole life a hymn of praise to Your boundless love and mercy. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.