

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Gospel According to Matthew (*Matthew 18:6-7*)

If anyone causes one of these little ones - those who believe in Me - to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – Never Undermine Christ’s Work of Redemption by Giving Bad Example

Giving scandal (bad example) - a very grievous sin. To give scandal is to cause others, by one’s word, or action or inaction, to stumble into confusion and error and thus into sin. Our Lord warns sternly in stark, simple language on the gravity of this sin. Scandals always undo Christ’s work of redemption. To Christ, it is better for that person causing the scandal not to exist than to exist to put a stumbling block to make others fall into sin. Why is the Lord’s message so stern? Giving scandal is effectively sowing seeds of destruction and death of souls. Like the grievous sin of slander, it is difficult to undo this sin as we may not know how many souls we misled through giving bad example. A pebble thrown into a pond creates ripples of water travelling far from the source. Do I give bad example to others by what I say, how I treat God and those around me, how I live, how I spend my leisure time, how I dress...

As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” (Romans 2:24, Isaiah 52:5, Ezekiel 36:20, 22). God’s people have a heavy responsibility to show God’s face to the world through His love and light. Bearing His Name, we have to be like Christ, a light shining in the darkness. However, are we more likely overcome by the darkness? Do we give God a bad name because of our unChristlike behaviour?

Separation of faith and daily life - most common scandal among Christ’s followers. Christ’s followers number around 2 billion in the world, half of which are Catholics. This is no small number. However, to what extent does the current world indicate a good assimilation of the values and truths of our religion e.g. supremacy of God in our lives versus priority of money, career, a comfortable lifestyle, etc., the sanctity of life versus wide-spread practice of abortion, the sanctity of marriage versus cohabiting and marriage breakdowns? Instead of transforming the world and “baptising them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” as the Lord has commanded us, by and large have we allowed ourselves to be evangelised by the world? How different are we from the secular world? How many times in our lives have we been persecuted for standing up for what we believe in?

Silence – another equally common scandal. The distinction between right and wrong is increasing getting blurred as people accept and keep quiet in the face of evil. Sometimes some souls are misguided into thinking they are practising charity or that they should not impose their opinions on others. Charity not linked to the truth is false charity. Was Christ thinking about the feelings of the Pharisees when He spoke out firmly on their hypocrisy? Was Christ imposing His opinion on the Pharisees or was He exposing and upholding the truth?

People with great potential for giving scandal or edifying influence - Parents, politicians, teachers, judges, church leaders, movie stars, pop stars and other individuals with privileged position and status in society. Research has shown that parents especially fathers have a very great influence on the faith formation of their children. Parents who do not treasure their faith find it extremely difficult to encourage their children to be good disciples of Christ. They have a great accountability to God to be living examples. This is one good reason God created families.

Building our house on sand (*cf. Matthew 7:24-27*). The Lord warns us that if we do not put into practice what we believe in, we lay for ourselves a weak foundation for our faith. When real persecution is confronted will we run off like a scared rabbit acting like the disciples who deserted Christ during His last hour? We can lose our precious faith. In losing our faith we lose everything that justifies our existence and all that is worthwhile and everlasting.

Conversation with the Lord

Precious Lord, through Your deep faith in God our Father and Your upholding of the truth in every moment of Your life, You set me a good example to follow. You were persecuted for proclaiming the truth. Your holy boldness made You rise above fear of running contrary to popular opinions. Help me commit myself to the living of my faith in my every day life. Cast out from my heart and mind anything which opposes holy truth and love. Help me guard my words, actions and behaviour with love so that they give light and draw people towards God. Give me the courage to be a good example by upholding the truths and values of my faith even when it is denied, scorned or mocked at. May I be more afraid of offending You than offending the feelings and opinions of others. Mary, Protectress of the Faith, strengthen my faith. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.