

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Gospel According to Luke (*Luke 14:25-27*)

On one occasion when a great crowd was with Jesus, He turned to them and said, “If anyone comes to Me without turning his back on his father and mother, his wife and his children, his brothers and sisters, indeed his very self, he cannot be My follower. Anyone who does not pick up his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.” The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – Persecution will form the true Christian

The call to obedience to God. God calls us to be in His will and to live in His love every present moment of our lives. Christ’s teaching is simple and clear: *If you love Me, keep my commands (John 14:15)*. Unless our hearts are fully focussed on the Lord, we will find the many obstacles that stand in our way daunting and difficult to overcome. These may usually come from those close to us. In our human culture we have been conditioned since young to please those around us especially loved ones. We want to keep them happy, be in their good books, be accepted by them, be approved and affirmed by them. To our friends we may be tempted to appear progressive and liberal in our thinking and to show them how tolerant we are even to the point of condoning their immoral lifestyle and mindset. We fear their rejection, their disapproval even if silent. And so we modify our behaviour to suit the company that we keep, often compromising the eternal truths deposited in our hearts by our faith. We keep quiet when our heart calls us to speak out and support the truths of our Lord’s teachings. When we do it so habitually, we mentally excuse ourselves for not standing up for our beliefs. We maintain a false peace. We forget that human opinions and feelings are just that. We forget that the eternal truths of our faith will set us free from sins (cf. John 8:32). If we do not uphold the truths of our faith to those near to us, we cannot evangelise to the world but are evangelised by the world. In compromising our faith, we forget our allegiance is to God in the first place, and that human opinions and feelings must take a back seat.

Are we building our house on sand? *But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” (Matthew 7:26-27)*. Faith has to be proven for it to be real. It has to be practised for it to be strong. The daily living of our faith builds a strong foundation of a house on rock that will not collapse should persecution rear its ugly head further down the road. The true road to salvation is arduous but God’s grace is available for every obstacle or difficulty that presents itself.

There is a real cost to being a disciple of Christ. Jesus said: *Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division (Luke 12:51)*. Jesus has already warned us that as His Kingdom is being established on earth, even close family members will be set against each other in the battle between good and evil. However, we should not be discouraged and recoil in fear of what will happen if we decide to fully live out our faith. These are the inevitable birth pains that will unfold as we advance on the true path to salvation by walking undeterred in the footsteps of Jesus, helped along by our Blessed Mother Mary. No mother in her right mind will say no to a child because of temporary birth pains.

Let the persecution come. Christ was accused of many things just because He speaks the truth. The truth will not be accepted by people who prefer to stay in darkness. To these people the truth is always threatening. Thus, persecution inevitably comes to those who uphold the truth. Jesus was rejected, humiliated, tortured and killed in a shameful, degrading way. But from death, comes the triumphant resurrection. In the same way, we too need to embrace our crosses and be crucified on the cross together with Jesus so that in being buried with Christ, we will prove ourselves worthy to share His glorious resurrection. The persecution we manfully confront will be that defining moment in time when we are given a quantum leap in our faith.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, You exhort me to follow You with a single heart. You desire me to place You first in my life knowing that this is the safest and shortest route I can walk to my eternal joys in heaven. You place loved ones in my life not to obstruct my walk to my eternal destination but for me to help them on their road to salvation. To be fighting fit to help them, I myself must be committed to the daily living of my faith. No person or thing should tempt me to compromise my faith. Give me the strength and confidence to always uphold the teachings of my faith. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.