

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Gospel according to Matthew (*Matthew 5:8*)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God

Only the simple and humble can recognize Christ when He came in the flesh. Very few people could recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah when He came in the flesh. Instead of honoring Him, the Jewish religious establishment at that time was bent on doing away with Jesus! They could not recognize Jesus as the Messiah despite the divine wisdom of His preaching and the miracles that clearly attested to His divinity. Though religious in their role, their hearts were not with God. They had fallen into the temptation the evil one sets for souls close to God: spiritual pride and self-righteousness. Instead, God used the poor shepherds to announce His Son's birth. These simple hearts devoid of pride had no difficulty in believing the message of the angel and spreading the good news of the birth of the Messiah. At the Presentation of Baby Jesus in the temple in Jerusalem, God chose two elderly, unknown, inconspicuous but devout and holy persons to witness to the presence of His Son, Jesus.

Recognizing the presence of God in others. The signature of God is in all He made. All of God's creations come with pattern, order and goodness. *God saw all that He had made, and it was very good (Genesis 1:31).* Whilst God would like us to appreciate His creation, most of all, He desires us to see His presence in the people around us. *The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'* (*Matthew 25:40*). Jesus makes a strong identification with those who are 'the least' – the poor, the weak, the marginalized, the wicked, those undeserving of our help. A key to faithfully following God's commandment to love is to see His presence in others. Thus, if we are able to see Christ's presence in others, we will be able to love even our enemies as commanded by our Lord. It takes a great generosity and purity of heart to be able to recognize Christ's presence in the people who did us harm.

Recognizing the hand of God in the things that happen to us especially the bad ones. Jesus reminds us that without His grace we can do nothing. God's graces are given to us in every present moment for us to do whatever that we need to do. Even the next breath is sustained by God's grace. *Apart from Me you can do nothing (John 15:5).* When things turn out the way we wish, it is easy to praise and thank God. However, when we encounter difficulties, tribulations and persecution despite our best efforts and intentions, our faith begins to waver and we start questioning God. A pure heart is a steadfast heart. A pure heart believes in the promise of God that all things, even the bad ones, can be turned to the benefit of those who love God (cf. Romans 8:28). *You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You (Isaiah 26:3).*

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it (Proverb 4:23). In the end, it will be our heart that will determine the state of our soul. A pure heart will lead to a pure soul. A hardened heart will be accompanied by a blackened soul. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit any more than a bad tree can produce good fruit. Good and pure thoughts, words and deeds arise from a pure heart. *But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them (Matthew 15:18).* Since all we do flows from our hearts, we must be very vigilant in guarding our hearts. This involves guarding our senses: what we see, what we hear/read, what we allow ourselves to feel (e.g. gratitude as opposed to fault-finding), what we allow ourselves to focus on (e.g. putting our own needs/interests first or rising to the needs of others). Not content with deceiving minds the devil would like to enter hearts as well to have greater dominion over us but we must not let this happen. *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).*

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, I do not seek visions but ask that the grace to recognize Your presence in others be given to me. Through Your Holy Spirit, You are present in all people. Help me surrender to You all the dark areas of my heart: pride, hatred, unforgiveness, envy, grudges, woundedness, useless desires which divide my heart and anything which is unloving. Give me a strong resolve to be Your true disciple so that I may always see and love You in others especially those who make life difficult for me. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.