

## Scripture Reading

### **A Reading from the Letter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 3:12-15)**

See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. As has just been said: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

### Reflection ~ Why we believe

**Ours is a unique love story that has never been repeated and will never be repeated:** *For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).* The crux of our faith is not merely a concept or even a way of life but a real, living person, Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God who lives and reigns with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. No other belief system has any claim like this. No one died to save the world from its sins except Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God. *But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).* It is not that we loved God but God loves us first and proved it in a powerful way.

**Sharing in the faith of the Apostles.** The Apostles proclaimed Jesus fearlessly and most of them died for their belief in Christ. They were totally convinced as they have seen Jesus with their own eyes, heard Him with their ears and touched Him with their hands (cf. 1 John 1:1-3). It was impossible for them to keep silent about Jesus. Even in the face of persecution by their religious authorities, St Peter and the other apostles went about proclaiming that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah. In front of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Court, in response to the High Priest's order never again to preach in Jesus' Name, St Peter and the other apostles replied, *"We must obey God rather than human beings!"* (cf. Acts 5:29).

**The Resurrection of Jesus brings us great indestructible hope.** Someone once said with great wisdom: show me someone who died and resurrected by his own power and I will follow him to the ends of the earth! The many signs and miracles that Jesus did and especially His own resurrection from the dead testify to the divinity of Jesus. Jesus explains clearly on His resurrection. *"...I lay down My life so that I may take it up again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again."* (John 10:17-18). St Paul said to the Corinthians: *And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith (1 Corinthians 15:14).*

**Faith is priceless, it cannot be bought, it is purely free gift from God.** *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).* God would very much wish to give faith to all His children. He loves each equally with the fullness of His sacrificial love. *God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).* The eternal, saving Truth is Jesus Christ, God's only Son. *Now this is eternal life: that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent (John 17:3).*

**Faith involves a decisive act of the free will.** A gift cannot be received if one closes one's heart to it. Sins harden and close one's heart to God's graces and truths. Faith involves an active, conscientious movement of our free will especially in times of persecution and adversity. It involves a leap of faith not unlike the marriage vow that the betrothed takes. Based on our limited intellect and heart on what we know and understand, we say "Yes" to the gift of the relationship placed out in front of us. *Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand."* St Augustine of Hippo. Understanding is one of the many gifts of the Holy Spirit.

### Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, thank You with all my heart for the priceless gift of faith. My faith in You is of paramount importance in my life. Your teachings shape my way of thinking and reform my heart as I try to walk in Your footsteps every day. *St Peter said: Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have (1 Peter 3:15).* Strengthen my faith by helping me practise all Your divine teachings so that when the time of adversity comes, my faith built on the solid foundation of rock will stand steadfast. Give me and all God's children a lion's share of the faith of Your apostles so that Your "Yes" will always be our "Yes" and Your "No" will be our "No" in response to this world. Mary, Mother of Salvation and Protectress of our Faith, pray for us. Thank You, Jesus. Praise, You, Jesus.