

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Gospel according to Matthew (*Matthew 5:47-48*)

And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – Combatting the evil within us

Trusting in and thinking of ourselves too much. Intellectual pride proves to be an irresistible temptation for many souls. Such minds question and do not accept the divine truths of our faith or only partially accept those that appeal to him. The stronger such a soul adheres to his opinion, the less likely he is to admit error, the harder is his conversion to the truth. *For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength (1 Corinthians 1:25).* We forget that our intellect and emotional capacity are gifts from God, and that God and His divine truths and teachings are beyond our limited human intellect and feelings. Only through love of God and humility are we able to understand more deeply the mysteries of God. *Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children." (Matthew 11:25).*

Allowing the negative thoughts of others to persist in our minds. Unbridled, the human mind is susceptible to constantly judging others. It is a great temptation to judge on external appearances. Very often double standards are used. Whilst we are quick to spot the faults and failings of others, we are often very blind to the same failings in ourselves, or we justify away our own faults and failings. Thus Jesus says: *Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? (Matthew 7:3).* Not actively rejecting the negative thoughts of others as soon as they appear in our minds leads to biases, prejudice, grudges, hatred and unforgiveness which will eventually translate into unloving behavior towards others. There is so much spiritual warfare taking place in the human mind.

Unwillingness to change, and persisting in complacency in the fight against sin. Very often, in our weaknesses, we do not understand how sin separates us from God. We fail to understand the gravity of sin because we judge sin according to the effect it produces on our feelings. Oftentimes, we are led by our own standard based on pride. We overlook and justify away our bad habits and vices. We are not driven by a strong desire to overcome them, and take our salvation for granted. Thus, Jesus tells us that whoever sins is a slave to sin (cf. John 8:34). Any sin we tolerate in our soul serves to increase the power of the evil one over us. In very strong language Jesus tells us: *If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell (Matthew 5:29).* In His Providence for our spiritual weakness, Jesus gives divine authority to His apostles to forgive sins (cf. John 20:23) in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Availing of this wonderful Sacrament often is our first step to holiness. Jesus also gives the example of the importance of a solid prayer life by praying constantly to God the Father. He says: *Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41).*

Persisting in ignorance of the teachings of our faith. *My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6).* We need to know, understand and embrace the divine truths of our faith so that our conscience can be formed in the truth. There are many things in the world today which suppress the truth and present falsehoods dressed up to look like truths. Thus, St Paul says: *We are to demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).* Without a conscience formed in the truth, how can we recognize falsehoods? *Ephraim is like a dove, easily deceived and senseless-- now calling to Egypt, now turning to Assyria (Hosea 7:11).*

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, I am called to be a saint because I am made for heaven. I surrender my mind to You. Purify it of anything which opposes holy truth. I submit it to full obedience to Your divine teachings. Fill me with Your light, knowledge, understanding and heavenly wisdom. I surrender my heart to You. Purify it of pride and anything which opposes holy love. Fill it with Your love and humility. I surrender my will to You. Help me to recognize and accept Your loving will for me. Give me the wisdom to know that it is only in Your will that I will find real fulfillment, security and lasting happiness. Fill me with Your passion and zeal for God's Kingdom. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.