

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (*Matthew 16:21-23*)

From that time on, Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to You." He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an obstacle to Me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – Good intention cannot make an evil act good

An intrinsically evil act remains evil no matter what the intention is or how it is carried out. For example, the act of killing another person is evil no matter what the intention is or how it is carried out e.g. by abortion or euthanasia. How astounded Peter must be at the strong reaction of Jesus when he tried to dissuade Jesus from carrying out His plan to go to Jerusalem where He would be crucified. Peter's motive was honorable in our human eyes and human thinking. But it was not so with God. In God's eyes, His holy and divine will is paramount and ranks most important above all. Yes, even over the physical comfort of Jesus Christ, Son of the Most High! Jesus lives to do God's will (cf. John 4:34). We too should follow the example of Jesus and live to do God's will. Once everyone can do this, true peace will fill all hearts, and earth will be like heaven.

"You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." (Matthew 16:23). Our conscience must be formed in God's truths by learning, understanding and putting into practice the divine teachings of Jesus Christ. If we merely think like a human being without adhering to Christ's teaching, chances are we will be in error without even realizing it. Peter did not realize he was in error, he probably thought he was being kind to Jesus. A good conscience is properly formed in the truth of the difference between good and evil, and always provides strong conviction when one is in error or sin. Thus, a good conscience will always lead us to make good and regular sacramental Confession. However, when one ignores one's conscience, and persists in sin and get used to it, the conscience becomes dormant and will no longer provide the warning. The practice of making good and regular Confession is a great grace. It makes one abhor even venial sins, understanding that even a venial sin juxtaposed against God's great love and sacrifice for us is a great offence against God's goodness.

The error in placing human comfort and concerns above allegiance to God, His laws and His will. Those who do not believe in the existence of God will naturally place at the top of their agenda human comfort and concerns. Followers of Christ will have the danger of doing this as well if what they profess to believe in is not put into practice or if the faith is not properly understood through lack of formation and study. God's laws which define evil clearly are not given to us to make life difficult but to help us walk in the true path so that we are made fit for eternal life. Their objective is for our eternal good. On the other hand, human concerns have a lower objective: some temporary good for the human condition. When God allows some suffering to come to us, there is always a divine purpose for this. In our limited human wisdom, we may not understand it but our faith tells us that our part is to accept it with the conviction that God can turn all things to our good (cf. Romans 8:28).

A true criterion that will help us avoid error and put us on the true path in whatever situation or problem: God's laws and will must come first on top of all human concerns (cf. Matthew 6:33). None of us want to be an agent of Satan, knowingly or unknowingly. We do not want Jesus to say to us: Get behind me Satan! The world is in gross error because it refuses to acknowledge the existence of God which can be perceived by the human intellect from the nature of the creation of God in this world. The issues of concern that the world is now grappling with: abortion, euthanasia, gender ideology, homosexual relations, sexual immorality, fornication, adultery, terrorist acts, etc. have one thing in common: placing human concerns over and above God's laws and will. God is not only rejected but the rebellion is manifested in the sins committed against God. *They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and **revered and worshiped the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. Therefore, God handed them over to degrading passions. Their females exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the males likewise gave up natural relations with females and burned with lust for one another (Rm 1:25-27.)***

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, form my conscience in the truths of God, in holy love and humility. Give me a deep understanding of my faith. Bestow upon me the discernment to know the truth of the difference between good and evil, an understanding that has eluded the world. Give me the holy courage to stand up for the truth no matter how unpopular it is. Help me to remain true and faithful to Your Word and divine teaching always. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk