

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (*Matthew 18:8-9*)

If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection ~ Jesus emphasizes the gravity and horror of sin

It seems Jesus cannot emphasize enough the gravity of sins. Only God truly knows how much sin offends Him and how sin separates us from His love. Sin is such a grave offence against God that it is only Jesus, the only Son of God who can provide a suitable sacrificial offering to God on our behalf and take away from us all the sins that we committed and repented of. St Paul tells us that there is nothing existing or will exist in this visible world or the spiritual world that has the power to separate us from God's love (cf. Romans 8:38). The only thing that can separate us from the love of God is our own unrepented sins. *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).* The price of our sins is no lower than the price of the precious Blood of the only Son of God! Is it any wonder Jesus goes to great lengths to teach us the gravity and horror of sin? Though we are forgiven every time we approach God in repentance, we must be vigilant against falling into the temptation of trivializing sin and committing the sin of presumption on God's mercy. God's mercy is unfathomable but it is for the repentant, and therefore, we should not take sins lightly. Every time we sin, we hurt the Sacred Heart of Jesus in a very personal way that we do not fully understand.

In our confused and erroneous world of today, sin is not recognized as sin but instead sinful acts are promoted, celebrated and accepted under the banners of "freedom", "choice", "human right" and "alternative life style". An unprecedented level of evil exists in our world today because the degree of demonic deception on the minds of people gets deeper and darker. As the enemy of God and of our salvation gets to work overtime on the hearts and minds of God's children, sins get trivialized as the truth of the existence of God meets with greater rejection, and the heart of the world turned inwards to concentrate on self in a growing culture of narcissism and self-gratification. *For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3).*

When sin is not recognized as sin, a sinner feels no need for repentance or to reform one's life or to embrace a Saviour. *There is no fear of God before their eyes. In their own eyes they flatter themselves too much to detect or hate their sin (Psalm 36:1-2).* Scripture tells us sin arises because there is no fear of God; pride and self-love blind us to our hidden sins. When a soul cannot recognize its own sins, being blinded by pride and hard-heartedness, it cannot seek the forgiveness from God that is required for salvation. Blindness to one's own sins besides arising from a lack of faith, can also grow from acceptance and tolerance of habitual sins. When a grave sin is committed the first time, a soul may feel great remorse in his heart. However, when the same sin is committed several times after, the soul feels lesser and lesser remorse till the day when it finally feels no more remorse. Thus, herein lies the wisdom of our Mother Church to advise its members to make a good Confession at least once a month or more frequently as needed. Sin has to be rooted out at its source and at the first time it rears its ugly head, otherwise it will become a habit or even worse a lifestyle.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, thank You for being the sacrificial Lamb of God that takes away all my sins, and for reminding me the gravity and horror of sin. The world is in such a miserable state today because it fails to recognize sin for what it truly is. May I be given the grace to detest sin as You detest it with all Your Sacred Heart. The human heart is the seat of sin (cf. Matthew 15:18-20). Purify my heart and mind to conform them to the original perfect order of loving subjection to Your divine will which is my roadmap to heaven. May my mind always have the strength to search out Your eternal truths and be renewed and reformed by it. Your Word is Truth (cf. John 17:17). May my heart be purified to love what You love so that love of God and neighbor will be the guiding principle of my life. By striving to be what You created me to be, may I have real peace even in this passing world and thereafter in Your glorious unending world to come! Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk