

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (*Matthew 5:48*)

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection- Responding to the Call to Holiness

We are made for heaven, to be with God for Whom sin has no place. In His perfect wisdom, God made us like Him – with a free will, an intellect for reasoning and a heart to share His love. Though God takes a chance when He gives each of us a free will, He did not make a mistake. God makes sure that those who decide to love God out of their own freewill will have all the divine graces available to do just that. Therefore, Jesus tells us: Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect. We have to be perfect as our final destination is in God. To be holy, we must make a firm decision to be so and make holiness the most important project of our lives. To be holy is to be our true, happy self, attaining the highest potential God made us to be.

The image of Jesus on the Cross – our greatest inspiration for holiness. It was our sins that nail Jesus to the cross. Jesus bears on His own Body our sins when He is nailed to the cross (cf. 1 Peter 2:24, Isaiah 53:6). Sin is the ugliest thing on earth in the eyes of God. God the Father has to turn away from the sight of Jesus on the cross, causing Jesus to cry out: My God, my God why have You forsaken Me? The rigorous justice of God calls for a high price for sin that only the Blood of Jesus can pay. God detests sin greatly and we should too with all our strength. Sin is the only thing which separates us from God Who will not force His salvation upon us. God's mercy is always available to us but we need to ask for it and repent of our sins.

Oftentimes, we measure the gravity of a sin by the false standard of our feelings. The reason for horror of sin is not so much the degree of negative feeling each sin invokes in us but the reality of the extent each sin separates us from God and the pain and suffering it brings to Jesus who loves us the most. A careless, ignorant attitude towards sin will produce a situation where sin is repeated without remorse. Personal pride will further blind the soul to the presence of unacknowledged sins and faults. Repeated venial sins without seeking forgiveness from God pave the way for mortal sins to come into the heart. *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). We must be vigilant against the “roaring, devouring lion” at all times. Satan is full of cunning and trickery, and it is only by grace of God that we can overcome him.

Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life (cf. John 6:27). The world urges us to be successful but the Lord exhorts us to be holy. Most people do not need to be reminded to put one's best efforts into one's career. But whilst we are so willing to work hard to gain earthly treasures, shouldn't we work doubly hard to gain treasures that last forever? *What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?* (*Matthew 16:26*). Thus, the true mission of the Church is the highest: not saving environment but souls.

Making room for our interior life. A constant and consistent prayer life is the foundation of an interior life of grace. Jesus shows the example by constantly getting away from the crowds to communicate with His Heavenly Father in prayer. Without prayer, not only will we not grow in holiness but will lose whatever little faith we have. Through prayer God molds our hearts and minds to attune to His divine will, imparts divine wisdom to seek the higher treasures, forms in us virtues that will help us walk consistently on the true path to our holy and glorious eternity. St Paul exhorts us to pray without ceasing, telling us that this is God's will for us (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). An interior life of grace is marked also by self-restraint developed through personal sacrifices especially fasting. Again, Jesus sets the example by fasting 40 days in the desert before embarking on His public ministry. To be a true follower of Christ we too need to strengthen ourselves by self-restraint through fasting.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You call me to holiness in order that I may be made fit for heaven. To be holy, my life must mirror Yours on earth. Help me develop an interior life of grace. Give me all the graces I need in order that I may always remain on the true path: recognizing and avoiding all evil and its subtle temptations, not allowing any sin to settle in my soul, adhering to Your Word and teachings no matter how unpopular it is with the world, praying sincerely everyday with my mind and heart, working on my self-restraint by penance and fasting, worthy reception of the Sacraments through which You pour torrents of grace into my soul, and following Your commandment to love unconditionally especially the undeserved and those who offend me, for love conquers all evil. Mary, Mother of Salvation, make me holy as you are holy. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.