

## Scripture Reading

### A Reading from the Gospel according to Luke (*Luke 9:23*)

Then He said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

## Reflection – Self-Abnegation is the doorway to holiness

**The Lord lays down clear-cut requirements for discipleship.** The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the perfect school where we can learn to walk in the way of the Lord. It is the perfect school where we can learn holy wisdom, the mother of fair love, and holy humility. We need holy wisdom to discern and pursue the things of eternal value. We need holy humility to be strong enough to overcome the naturally sinful desires of our flesh. *Jesus says: Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart (cf. Matthew 11:29).* His life on earth is the perfect model of holiness for us to emulate. In our cross is embedded God's will for us. It comprises the filial obedience to God's commandments, loving and trustful acceptance of all the sufferings God sent us and our sincere response to God's call to holiness. All these require placing God at the top of our life priorities, and the interests of others before our own, which require self-denial for a noble cause or self-abnegation.

**Filial adherence to God's commandments requires self-abnegation.** There are people who choose to lead lives of self-indulgence with the gratification of every desire and craving of mind and body. Yet these people feel sadly empty and unfulfilled. Jesus tells us that true happiness comes from living in God's love by keeping His commandments (cf. John 15:10-11). What a simple but profound secret to true joy! True happiness is accessible to all. The soul is made by God, and only love of God can truly satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul. God is unchanging, and His commandments cast in stone without allowing any exception, show us the way to eternal salvation, expose evil, and define clearly and authoritatively for us what is good, true and right not according to shifting human opinion or relativistic human moral values, but according to the One Who will be our final judge and Who will judge according to His own criteria and not the world's. Christ asks us to show our love for Him by adhering to God's commandments (cf. John 14:15). God asks us to put Him first in all things and He promises to meet all our needs (cf. Matthew 6:33). He asks us to put others ahead of our own interests. *Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves (Philippians 2:3).*

**Loving and trustful acceptance of our sufferings and sorrows require self-abnegation.** Each soul will have a sip from the cup of suffering that Jesus metaphorically drank on Calvary (cf. Matthew 20:22). No disciple is greater than the master, and no soul will be immune from sufferings of one kind or another. However, when Jesus came to earth, He sanctified human sufferings especially those borne patiently, because He endured them Himself. With each cross God sends, He also makes available the grace giving the strength to carry it. The greater the cross, the greater the grace. When St Paul begged the Lord to remove a physical affliction from his body, the Lord's response was: *My grace is enough for you..* (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:9). The weaker we are, the greater we can manifest His glory when we accept our crosses, because Christ's power is made perfect in weakness. Thus, St Paul says he was happy to boast about his weaknesses as through them Christ's power may rest on him. With God's grace, let us not be discouraged by our weaknesses and not let them lead us to sin but rather like St Paul, patiently endure and overcome it with the assurance that Christ's strength works mightily in those who strive to do God's will (cf. Philippians 4:13).

**Our cross is the threshold to our glory.** *For the sake of the joy that lay before Him He endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken His seat at the right of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).* Just as Jesus endured His Cross as the necessary passage to His glory, we too have to embrace our cross and carry it meritoriously with the grace of God. St Paul understood well the power of the Cross of Christ. He said that he would only boast about the Cross of Christ which delivered him from all bondages of the world (cf. Galatians 6:14). After his dramatic conversion, St Paul, one of the most zealous of the apostles, could not stop proclaiming the Crucified Christ. *But we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).* It is only through the faithful carrying of our cross that we can be called disciples of Christ and enter into His glory.

**Conversation with Jesus:** Precious Lord, Your Cross delivered me from bondage to sins and the world. To be qualified as Your disciple and to enter into Your glory, I must carry my cross meritoriously like You. Give me the grace to embrace my cross in which is embedded God's will for me. Help me love my cross. Self-abnegation is the doorway to holiness. Mary, Mother of Salvation, give me your wisdom, humility, ardent love of God and horror of sin. May the Crucified Christ always be the inspiration, focus, strength and love of my life. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. [www.twohearts.hk](http://www.twohearts.hk)