

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel According to Luke (Luke 9:23-25)

Then He said to them all: "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection ~ The Cross - a gift from God for my sanctification and the salvation of others

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). We are created to be holy so that we can be with our Eternal Father in Heaven for eternity. *For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight (Ephesians 1:4).* God's plan is perfect, and if we are open to His will, our future will be bright beyond our imagination. Unholiness is not acceptable to the Father. Holiness is not an option, it is a command from God. Because of where we come from, where we are destined for eternity, there is only one true path to follow: holiness is a personal vocation for every one of God's children. To partake of God's eternal life, love, joy and glory for eternity, we need to be like our Heavenly Father: holy and blameless not in the sight of men but of God. Christ's supreme Sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary opens the gates of heaven for us and makes available all the graces we need in order to attain the holiness necessary to enter heaven.

The holy Cross, the instrument of God's sanctification and salvation. When Jesus died on the cross, He rendered all the sufferings and crosses we bear precious and redemptive when we unite them to His divine sufferings. Our sufferings are no longer useless and meaningless. God could have chosen to save us in a different way but He did not. In accordance to His infinite wisdom, this is the perfect way although it came at a great personal cost to Jesus. Jesus says: *Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him (John 13:16).* If the Divine Master who is sinless suffered so much, His disciples are expected to share in His sufferings. Through our Baptism, we are given a share in Christ's mission of salvation. We are made priests, prophets and kings for His Kingdom. Priests – to offer sacrifices and prayers for others. Prophets – to spread the Good News of Jesus. Kings – to win souls for God's Kingdom through the way we live our lives.

Jesus shows us how to pick up our cross. To accept the cross, we need to deny, renounce, forget ourselves. Jesus sets us a great example. From the glory and majesty of His throne in heaven, Jesus condescended to come in the flesh into our sinful world. It was a great stepping down for Him. From radiant, unsurpassed glory that is due only to Him, He humbled Himself and became nothing. *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:6-8).* Jesus teaches us a great lesson in true humility and obedience to God through His own concrete example. Without humility we cannot hope to bend to God's will and be obedient to what He commands even though we know that what He commands is absolutely good for us. Jesus desires greatly to see humility in our heart: Jesus says: *learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart (Matthew 11:29).*

All the graces needed to carry our cross meritoriously are available to us for the asking. Though God demands a high standard from His children, He never demands that which cannot be carried out. He provides all the graces and help needed by His children who are open to His divine will. Our very self is made for holiness. Our innermost heart is filled with a deep longing that only God can satisfy. *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, my God (Psalm 42:1).* Whilst our flesh is weakened by sin and tends towards evil, our soul tends towards its Maker and its Highest Good. God's Spirit is present in every one of God's children to lead the way and guide us on the true path. *The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:6).*

Jesus needs our help in carrying His cross. *Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of His Body, which is the Church (Colossians 1:24).* St Paul has a great love for Jesus and happily proclaims his joy in being able to do his part to help carry the cross of Jesus. Depending on the generosity of our spirit, God will give each of His children a part of Christ's Cross which will serve not only for our own personal sanctification but which will also contribute to the salvation of others especially those who reject the mercy of God and His promises.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, it is only through love and humility that I can pick up my cross and follow You. There is no other route by which to follow You other than by way of the cross. The cross is not a punishment but a gift from You to share in Your sufferings and an instrument to purify me and make me holy and to help save others. The extent I share Your Cross will be the degree I will share in Your glory in heaven. Open my heart to embrace all the little crosses You send me every day so that I can help You generously in Your mission of salvation. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk