

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Ephesians (*Ephesians 4:22-24*)

That you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection: Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh

The world, Satan and the flesh. St Paul reminds us of these three key enemies of our salvation: If we live following the current value system of this world, following 'the ruler of the power of the air' (Satan) and following the wishes and impulses of the flesh (our lower selfish nature), we will die in our sins (cf. *Ephesians 2:1-3*). Satan is the Master Deceiver and works covertly under cover as he intends to deceive the world that he does not exist. Currently, he controls our fallen world and is aptly called Prince of the World. Thus, he has the audacity of offering the world as an enticement to Jesus in his temptation of Jesus when Jesus was fasting in the desert. Being extremely successful at this time in corrupting hearts and minds, he is working in every strata of our society, in every institution, in every part of the world and tempting all hearts and minds.

We are called to turn away from the worldly way of life. St Paul called it the Gentile way of life. *So I declare and testify in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; darkened in understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance, because of their hardness of heart (Ephesians 4:17-18)*. Without God in their lives, the unbelievers (Gentiles) would have darkened and ignorant minds and hardened hearts. Such a life is futile in the eyes of God as they hardly produce anything of eternal value. Ignorance here does not imply lack of knowledge but lack of knowledge of the saving truths of God. Not understanding the nature of sin, a life spent pursuing one's desires outside the truth of God will accumulate unrepented sins which harden the heart and darken the mind, making the work of temptation by Satan much easier.

Natural inclination to sin. Concupiscence. Even after Baptism, some effects of Original Sin persist. We have to struggle with the help of God's grace against concupiscence, our natural tendency to sin due to our fallen nature. When we were unbelievers, we were under the dominion of Satan, carrying out unknowingly what he tempted us to do. As we cannot see him, we were unaware of his evil hand in our lives because he tempted us through the world and people around us exteriorly and through the flesh interiorly. *I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want (Galatians 5:16-18)*. As long as we are in the flesh, we will always have interior conflict of the sanctifying desires of the Holy Spirit and the corrupting desires of the flesh, our lower self. The Spirit desires what the flesh hates.

Called to live a life in Christ and for Christ. Christ redeems us at great cost and calls us not to live a life as we wish but a life that is lived in Him and for Him. Christ sets us free from the past sinful life, from the blindness and futility of the godless world and its value system and gives us all the graces we need to overcome any temptation from the world, Satan or any weakness of the flesh. The world is constantly "evangelizing" to us, dressing up sin to look good and appealing. We have to constantly cleanse and renew our minds from demonic deception that would be difficult for unbelievers to discern. We have to be vigilant. We have to live the truths of our faith, witness to it by our way of life and defend it when the situation calls for it. We are called not just to remove the evil and the ungodly from our lives but to replace them with the righteousness and truth that comes with a life lived in Christ and for Christ. Christ has shown us the danger of removing evil and not filling in its place the things God stands for (cf. *Luke 11:24-26*). A vacuum does not exist for long, it is soon filled.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You call me to live a life in You and for You so that I can regain my true nature in which I was created in righteousness and holiness in the truth of God. The world is constantly tempting me and I need to renew my mind, heart and spirit always so that I can remain in Your truth and love. You call me to rid myself of all deceitful desires which bring some fleeting, earthly pleasure but lead to the darkening of my mind and the hardening of my heart. Anoint me with Your Holy Spirit and open my heart and mind to follow the gentle inspirations of the Spirit so that my life can be a witness of my faith and that it will mirror Yours during Your time on earth when You live a life in unquestioning obedience to the Heavenly Father so that all may benefit eternally from it. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.