

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Gospel According to Matthew (*Matthew 22:35-39*)

One of them, an expert in the law, tested Him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection ~ What is Christian Love?

God is the source of true love. God is love. (cf. 1 John 4:8). St. John the evangelist tells us that God is not merely loving but is love - the essence, the substance, the source of love. Where God is absent, there is no love. How do we get the love that is present in our hearts? St. Paul tells us that God has poured out His love into our hearts through the action of the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 5:5) which has been given to us. We love because of the love that is put into our hearts by God. The secular world is inclined to promote its concept of love apart from God. It is a fallacy. If our water source is from the rain, we cannot want water without wanting the rain. It is useless to deny the existence of God while trying to advocate love of people.

There is an order to love. God always comes first (cf. Luke 14:26, Matthew 10:37). When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He said firstly, love God with all our heart, soul and mind, then love others the way we love ourselves. God created us out of nothing to share His life, His love, His joy, His glory, His kingdom. He owes us nothing, we owe Him everything. When mankind fell into sin, God sacrificed His only beloved Son to redeem mankind. Through and in Jesus Christ, God adopted us as His children not because we deserve it but “*according to His pleasure and good will*” (cf. Ephesians 1:5). God not only removes our sins from us but just as importantly, empowers us to live in Christ’s righteousness – “*to be holy and blameless in His sight.*” (cf. Ephesians 1:4). And all these are in God’s decision before creation began! (cf. Ephesians 1:4). God’s love for us is more tender than the best mother’s. *Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! (Isaiah 49:15).* God deserves to be loved above all others! We must be convinced of this so that we can put our hearts right with God.

Love for God must filter down to love for others. *Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. (1 John 4:20).* St. John the Evangelist tells us our love for God must be translated into love for others. We are commanded by God to love others not because they deserve it or not but because of God’s goodness to us (cf. 1 John 4:19). God is present in all His creatures. When we love others, we love God in them. Thus God commands us to love our enemies as well (cf. Matthew 5:44). Not only does Christ teach this effectively through His own convincing example but He also empowers us to do it (cf. Philippians 4:13) though it may seem humanly impossible.

True love is sacrificial. In our mixed up world of today, the word love can mean different things to different people. Jesus came to earth to show us how to love. Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords (cf. Revelation 17:14) could have come as a conquering military ruler to free the Israelites from the Roman rule as hoped for by the ancient Israelites. However, God’s ways are vastly different from man’s. From the time of His birth in a stable to His death on the Cross, Jesus led a life of poverty, hard work, rejection, humiliation, pain, anguish and suffering. Jesus endured the highest degree of pain and suffering by a human being (cf. St. Lawrence Justinian). St. John the Evangelist tells us: *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. (1 John 3:16).*

If you love Me, keep my Commandments (John 14:15). Jesus tells us that to love Him is to follow in His footsteps. It is not a mere sentiment but a Christian way of life. Jesus tells us that if we want to be His follower, we must turn from our selfish ways, pick up our cross and follow Him (cf. Matthew 16:24).

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, You came to earth to show us how to love. You gave Yourself totally to God, Your Father for His glory and the welfare of souls. Help me to follow in Your footsteps and to understand that there is no other road to eternal joy than following the path You marked out for me: walking in love and carrying my cross. Purify my heart to remove all hardness, grudges, unforgiveness and all things which oppose holy love. Let Your Precious Blood flow over my heart to heal it. Fill me again with Your holy love that I may love You more ardently and put You first in my life. Mary, Protectress of the Faith, teach me to love like You! Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.