

Scripture Reading

A Reading From the Book of Psalms (*Psalms 22:1-5*)

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but You do not answer, by night, and am not silent. Yet You are enthroned as the Holy One; You are the praise of Israel. In You our fathers put their trust; they trusted and You delivered them. They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection ~ *Where are You Lord?*

When God seems absent. How many times in our lives the above words of David the psalmist echo the cry of our hearts when we find ourselves in dire need of God and He seems to be absent. It could be the time when a great tragedy hit our lives and we could not make sense of it or when out of the blue the strong feeling of doubt of the existence of God and the emptiness of our inner being assailed us out of no reason whatsoever. In such circumstances we may be comforted to know that even holy souls like Mother Theresa was not spared from such temptations. However, Mother Theresa went on doing God's work, led by her faith in God rather than the feelings of her heart, no matter how agonising it was to her. St. John of the Cross went through similar experiences and called it "the dark night of the soul."

Maturing of the Faith. God allows such feelings of doubt in His existence, emptiness and spiritual dryness in our interior life in order that we may mature in faith and deepen our trust in Him. Mother Theresa glorified God more with her work despite being assailed by such feelings than when she was not. Thus a timely reminder from St. Paul is useful: *We live by faith, not by sight.* (2 Corinthians 5:7). We are led by our faith in God and not by what our senses or feelings tell us. Whilst we do not deny our feelings (they are part of us), we are not overcome by them and we can always confide to God and surrender them to Him. God understands. It is also useful to remember St. Paul's teaching that nothing separates us from the love of God (cf. Romans 8:38-39). Absolutely nothing except our own sins. That is why it is very important for us to go for the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) on a frequent basis.

Clinging on to God's Promises rather than relying on our feelings. Scripture tells us that God promises never to abandon us (cf. Deuteronomy 31:8, Psalm 37:28, John 14:16-18, Hebrews 13:5). In such circumstances when God seems absent, we must live God's Word, deepen our trust in Him and overcome our own feelings, understanding that feelings are transient - they come and go but God is more interested in our steadfast faith. Faith based on feelings alone is shallow and immature. We are to seek and trust God even in extremely difficult situations in our lives when He seems absent, and not to require the pleasant feeling of His presence for an affirmation of our faith – there is a world of difference between the two – one is of mature faith, the other is a baby faith.

Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood lives in Me, and I in him. (John 6:56). Those of us who receive Holy Communion in a state of grace are reminded that when we do so, Christ lives in us, and we live in Him. Again, this is a timely reminder in times when we are assailed by the 'dark night of the soul'. Instead of relying on our feelings generated by our situation, we need to really assimilate the truth that Christ does indeed live in our hearts so that we may not again subject Him to the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane this time in the very sanctuary of our own hearts. We make sure that Jesus is always a welcome guest in our hearts. Jesus, You are the Son of the Living God who is now living in my heart – should be our mantra. How joyful our lives would be if we really live this truth!

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, You share with me a little drop of Your bitter chalice when You send me feelings of doubt in Your existence and emptiness in my heart. In such circumstances help me remember that in fact You are very near and Your graces for the present moment are fully available to me. You are LOVE, eternal and unchanging. Whether or not I feel it, You are always present – all around me, in me and with me. Give me the wisdom, faith and strength to live this truth. Lord, I want to glorify You by putting all my trust in You. Mary, Protectress of the Faith, come to my aid always. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.