

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Philippians (*Philippians 4:19*)

My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection - God will provide His grace for every Cross we are asked to carry

Around 2.4 million ancient Israelites survived in the desert by the amazing grace of God! When Moses led the Israelites in the exodus out of Egypt, the number of able-bodied men alone was about 600,000 (cf. Exodus 12:37). Excluding the Egyptians who joined them, scholars believe that the total number of Israelites who left Egypt during the exodus, including women, children and old men was around 2.4 million people! How this great number of people survived for 40 years in the hot desert is a great testimony to the saving power of God's grace. The journey to the Promised Land was supposed to take only 11 days (cf. Deuteronomy 1:2) but it took 40 years because of the rebellion and faithlessness of the Israelites. God in His infinite patience took care of their every need. When they complained about hunger, God provided manna that stayed fresh as long as the Israelites gathered it according to God's instructions. God supplied water out of a rock! (cf. Numbers 20:11). Amazingly, through the grace of God, their clothing and shoes did not wear out! (cf. Deuteronomy 8:4, Nehemiah 9:21).

Every soul will be tested but for every trial God sent, He provides the corresponding grace to overcome it. *For whom the Lord loves, He disciplines; He scourges every son He acknowledges (Hebrews 12:6).* The sufferings and trials that God allows to come our way will be used to purify us from earthly attachments that stand in the way of our response to God's call to holiness. Through our sufferings God leads our spirit to the 'desert' where there is no distraction and He can speak tenderly to our heart (cf. Hosea 2:14). Heart to heart, God will speak of His enduring love, He will show us where we have erred, He will show us how to get back to our first love, God Himself, and He will show us how to become whole again. Not only does our suffering help in our own sanctification but it can help other souls. St Paul says: *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of His Body, which is the Church (Colossians 1:24).* Let us assume the holy attitude of St Paul and bear our sufferings meritoriously for our soul and other souls.

We get the greatest grace to help us carry our cross when we surrender it to God, and stand firm in our faith and trust in God. We carry much needless burden when we do not bring all our troubles to God in prayer. What a privilege we forego when we do not do this and try instead to rely on our own human power. God is the only person Who can receive all our troubles and burdens and gives us peace in return. *Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy, and My burden light (Matthew 11:28-30).* It requires faith and trust to carry everything to God in prayer. Even though we may at times feel what St Paul says: *"For Your sake we are being slain all the day; we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered,"* even then this great saint reminds us that through the grace of God, we are more than conquerors in Christ in any adversity God may send our way (cf. Romans 8:37).

When we seek first the Kingdom of God, our needs are specially taken care of by God. *But seek first the Kingdom [of God] and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides (Matthew 6:33).* When there is a disorder of priorities in our lives, and we do not live the truth of God's dominion over us, we seek the wrong things and priorities, and our important needs are not met. God promises that He will provide for all our needs if we put Him and the concerns of His Kingdom on the top of our priority. St Paul reminds us that if God can give up His Son for our sakes, would He not provide us with everything else that we need? (cf. Romans 8:32). God has His own perfect timing, and His ways are different from ours. He knows what we need even before we know it ourselves. *Before they call, I will answer (Isaiah 65:24).*

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, Your sufferings on our behalf give meaning to all human sufferings borne patiently and especially for You and united to Your Passion. Give me all the graces to bear patiently all the crosses I have to bear in my life out of love for You and in union with You. Help me remember it is but a sip of the Chalice of Bitterness which You had to drink on Calvary. My suffering united to Your Passion is a most beautiful gift to God because it makes me like You, my Crucified Christ, and constitutes my concrete share in Your redemptive Cross on Calvary. Through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I consecrate to You all my sufferings, pain and sorrows from my first breath to my last one, united to Your Passion for the glory of God and salvation of all souls. Mary, Mother of Salvation, teach me carry my cross meritoriously like You. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.