

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Book of Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 58:6-8)

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter - when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – The Fast that will Bring Real Joy to Jesus

Fasting from sins has an immediate liberating effect. Although fasting from our favourite foods and meat is a necessary part of our Christian way of life to increase our self-control and to offer an acceptable sacrifice to our Lord in reparation for our sins, fasting from sin is far more superior. *Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.” (John 8:34).* The more we sin, the more we put ourselves under the influence of the evil one, unwittingly increasing his power over us. Piling up unrepented sins over time, a soul unconsciously leave the door of his life open to Satan. Thus, without the grace of God, it is extremely difficult to break a sinful habit. However, putting a stop to a sin especially a habitual one effectively breaks up the bondage due to the sin. Coupled with the Church’s Sacrament of Confession, fasting from sin brings about true freedom - freedom in the highest sense – spiritual freedom to love God as He deserves and to love others as He commands us, and achieving our highest potential that God plans for us.

Purging our minds of deception and sinful thoughts. Our minds are the target of lies, deception and compromise of truth that the evil one would love to bring into them. A weak vulnerable mind is one that is compromised by self pride and disorderly self-love. Such a mind is not strong or alert enough to discern and reject lies, and thoughts that are unloving, judgemental, impure, false, negative and depressive at which the evil one works hard to contaminate our minds. In such a compromised mind, the little faults of others become magnified into something intolerable. The whole pattern of mindset becomes affected by such negative mental attitudes actively encouraged by the evil one. Inevitably, sinful thoughts lead to sinful behaviour.

Purging our hearts of sin and hard-heartedness. *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it (Proverbs 4:23).* Guarding our heart is extremely important for it is the source of everything we do - where the heart is, the body follows. Because of this, the heart is under constant attack by the enemy of our salvation. What contaminates a soul is what comes from inside a person - the heart. *Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.” (Mark 7:15).* The enemy of our salvation tries to defile our hearts through active encouragement of hatred, unforgiveness, grudges, ill-feelings, hard-heartedness, guilt, hopelessness, depression, wickedness, etc. Such a one weak in love and charity towards others will find it difficult to resist such temptations of the heart. Only holy love and true humility can guard a heart from such attacks by the evil one which is always hard at work.

Purging our mouths and tongues of gossip, lies, any word which does not build up a person. *The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell (James 3:6).* The power of the tongue especially to do harm is usually underestimated. Once a gossip is let loose, it can never be retracted, it is like fire let loose in a dry forest. The wicked wagging of the tongue has destroyed many a reputation and lives and set their owners on the broad road to perdition. Instead of gossiping we can use our God-given gifts of the tongue to bless.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, You have said that if any part of my body causes me to sin and sets me on the road to perdition, it is better I do without that body part (cf. Matthew 5:29-30). My body is Your gift to me to be used in a way to bring glory to You by building up Your Kingdom on earth through manifesting Your unconditional love to others by the example of my words and deeds. Purify my mind and cast out from it anything which opposes holy truth. May it harbour only loving thoughts. Purify my heart of selfishness and pride. Let holy love and humility stand guard over my heart. Open my heart and fill it with Your Divine love. Help me fast from unloving thoughts, unloving words and unloving actions. I know this fast will truly bring joy to Your Sacred Heart. Mary, Protectress of the Faith, pray for me. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.