

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to Titus (*Titus 3:5-7*)

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, Whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – Mercy without the Truth cannot save us

God's greatest work and the greatest manifestation of His mercy is the salvation of His children. Though God created us without our help, He desires to save us with our help. He has bestowed on us the gift of freewill and will not force His salvation on us. He exhorts every one of us not to take our salvation for granted. St Paul tells us: *continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12)*. Yes, we should never grow presumptuous and take our salvation for granted but always remind ourselves that we are redeemed by nothing less than the precious Blood of Jesus Christ, only begotten Son of God, the Most High.

God's mercy comes with a very simple condition. *To receive His mercy, we must admit our faults (CCC 116)*. True repentance is the condition for receiving forgiveness from God. *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9)*. True repentance opens up our hardened hearts to receive God's mercy. It is the first step to receiving mercy and salvation from God. Repentance is so important that it is the first and last topic of Christ's preaching during His time on earth. *From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." (Matthew 4:17)*. *And repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47)*. *There are no limits to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept His mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit. Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss (CCC 136-137)*.

Mercy without the truth cannot save us. True mercy is not merely compassion; it is not just trying to make the afflicted feel better but is much higher than that – it is to desire above all the other's highest welfare - the eternal salvation of the afflicted. *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:36)*. God the Father is so merciful that He offered a great personal sacrifice when He sent His only beloved Son, Jesus Christ to redeem the world. *For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)*. We are asked to imitate our lovely Heavenly Father in showing mercy to others. We are to forget our own pain and sacrifice to focus instead on the welfare of those who are afflicted and in need. However, if in showing "mercy" we set aside God's laws and condone sin in the face of non-repentance and non-amendment of a sinful life, we are helping the afflicted to continue to walk on the road of misery at the end of which salvation cannot be found. We have to be vigilant against false mercy.

False mercy is aggressively promoted in our present confused world to condone what is sinful in God's eyes. *They worship Me in vain; they teach as doctrine the precepts of men (Mark 7:7)*. In recent times, our poor, confused, tortured world is increasingly caught up with confusion, error and falsity in a dark age when the Enemy of our Salvation, the Master Deceiver is working hard overtime through his human agents. Thus, the promotion of abortion comes clothed as emancipation and freedom of choice for women. Euthanasia becomes "mercy" killing. Homosexual acts have been embraced in many western countries. The latest evil deception to take the western world by storm is the so-called gender theory/identity which says it is the right of anyone including young children to identify with whatever sex they feel like it at that moment, irrespective of the biological sex that they have been borne with. Thus, increasingly, we can see God's laws are set aside, trampled over in contempt in favour of human precepts, "human rights", etc. all in the name of false mercy. God's laws are given to us to guide us to eternal life. Once we cast them aside to cater to any human reason, we put at risk our very own eternal salvation.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, through Your sorrow and agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, give us and all unrepentant sinners true contrition for our sins. Through the grace of repentance open all hearts to receive Your mercy, love, forgiveness and salvation. On the Cross on Calvary, You uttered the painful words: "I thirst" (John 19:28). Let me satiate Your burning thirst for love and for souls by helping to bring within Your loving arms all unrepentant souls who are blind to Your promise for salvation by my prayers, sufferings, trials and sorrows in my life which I offer as sacrifice for their souls. Help me love You more so that I can help You save more souls. In this way, I can imitate my Heavenly Father in His great love for souls. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk