


# Characteristics Of The Followers of Jesus Christ



“When they saw the star,  
they rejoiced exceedingly  
with great joy.”

- Matthew 2:10 -

*All glory, praise and thanks are Yours: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit, One God, as it was in the beginning, is now and for ever.*

*Amen and Amen. Alleluia.* 

*“In all truth I tell you, no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born through water and the Spirit; what is born of human nature is human; what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit”*

*Jesus Christ (John 3:5-8)*

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Written by: Niran Noel Iskandar Salmon

(A parishioner of St. Mark’s Catholic Parish, Pakuranga, Auckland, New Zealand)

For any information please send an email to: [niran\\_iskandar@hotmail.com](mailto:niran_iskandar@hotmail.com)

PS: Out of my respect for God, I deliberately used a plural verb, e.g. God don’t hate.

The photo on the cover page is a banner designed by the graphic designer Mrs Janice Banks ([www.janicecreations.com](http://www.janicecreations.com)) on the request of Fr. Raphael Lobo, and based on the message: “The Shepherd’s care towards his sheep leading to Christ”, in 2009. The banner belongs to St. Mark’s Catholic Parish, Pakuranga, Auckland, New Zealand, and has some of its parishioners.

## ***Introduction***

*This booklet is a gift for every person who wants to stand for a moment to separate their body from its spirit [i.e. thoughts and feelings, that fill the heart, of knowing, loving and living God's Word; i.e. "Faith"], and wonder: "Who am I and what am I doing here?" ... "Who owns this body and how will it become a luminous alive soul [i.e., spiritual body]?" ... "Who is important: the external body's look, or the soul, and why?" ... "Can God see in me a healthy body with a spirit that is still in a swaddling cloth or in a coma unable to move? Or see a body that is weary with a radiant spirit as the Sun that has no boundaries, so He'll make me hear His Voice and tell me what He told His Beloved Son: 'This is My Son, the Beloved; My favour rests on Him'(Matthew 3:17)?" ... "Have I forgotten you, O my soul, whom God entrusted you to me, and I no longer care for your needs, so I hid you and buried you inside my body and I thought if I took care of my body I have taken care of you?"*

*Many questions lead us to stop and reflect, repent and do maintenance work to become an image of God's Beloved Son: Jesus son of the Virgin Mary: Son of man, sincere, good and honest, so our souls would be enchanted and pray:*

*My Lord and my God, thank you O Gentle Compassionate Father, the good Shepherd who came searching for us, found us and made us repent, and looked after us with delight and satisfaction and became for us as an evergreen cypress tree under which we feel safe in its shade, and are healed by its leaves as You mentioned in the past (Hosea 14:2-9). We thank you for enlightening our lives and providing us with fruits to be a light to others, reflecting Your Love for them. My Lord and my God, who are we? We are the children of your daughter, the Virgin Mary, who believed that what was said by You would be fulfilled, and taught us to obey Your Word, and repeat what she'd said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour", Amen and Amen.*

## **Acknowledgement**

*I would like to thank Fr Ezio Blasoni SM, Administrator of St. Luke's Catholic Community, Flat Bush, Auckland, New Zealand, for writing the Foreword for my book "Followers of Jesus Christ" from which the articles within this booklet are taken, i.e. Chapter 3 - "Characteristics of the Follower of Jesus Christ".*



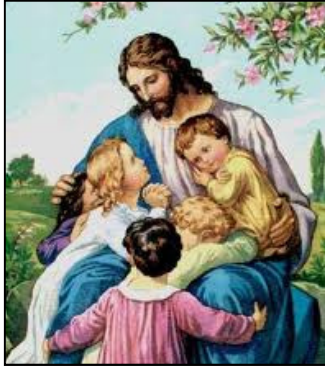
**Characteristics  
Of  
The Followers of Jesus Christ**

**INDEX**

	<u>Page</u>
Who Are We? .....	1
The Sower and I .....	2
A Call For Holiness .....	3
Humbleness	
1. Humble Workers .....	6
2. The Courage to Kill Pride .....	7
Salt of Earth: 'Better To Be Safe Than Sorry' .....	9
The Loving Son .....	11
Perseverance .....	14
Carry the Cross of Body & Soul .....	16
The Sinner ... The Saint .....	19
Glory be to God .....	22
Temple for God .....	23
The Christian Life .....	24
Prisoner of Love .....	27
Our Relationship With God .....	28
The Healer .....	30
Raising of the Dead: "The New Heaven and the New Earth" ...	32
The Perfect Moment .....	34
Conversation Between My Conscious & My Soul .....	38
The Image of the Christian's Heart: LOVE .....	39
Ambassadors for Christ: Trees of the Forest .....	40



# Who Are We?



*My Lord and my God ... The followers of Your Beloved Son say that You are their Heavenly Father, as they are Your Children and heirs who hold Your characteristics, i.e. The Spirit of Christ (Galatians 4:6-7), and if strangers asked them: "What do you believe?", they'll answer: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, creator of Heaven and Earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in One Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, Giver of Life as stated in the Creed". And if they were asked: "Who are you?", they'll cheer and say:*

*"Who are we? We are Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, Son-of-God, who came down from Heaven to redeem us and purify us; opened wounds on His Holy Body to be graves for our sins and rolled a heavy stone of His Holy Blood over it and sealed it, making us 'Children of God'. And for the sake of God's Holy Name (that we carry and are called by through Jesus Christ), we need to show the Holiness to others through our pure heart and righteous spirit created in us by the power of the Holy Spirit that we received on our baptism day, and then fed with His Word, His Love and His Compassion and Mercy for all the days of our life. We are children growing up in the House of their Father, in His Holy Sanctuary, and sharing His table. We strive always, with God's Divine Providence, Aid and Protection, to reflect the Holiness of God and His Love for the world through words of love, peaceful thoughts and acts of mercy towards others, withstanding pain and not be a source of it, and forgiving (1 Peter 2:20-23), so when others see us they will see God as we are a mirror to the Face of God. We praise God's Name by walking with Him humbly, listening and obeying His Word avidly, and surrendering completely to His Will."*

*And if someone wanted to describe himself, he will say:*

I know I am His child, one of many, He treat us all the same  
He will come running for my help if He see me crying in pain

He know that I trust in His Holy Name

He know what I need to ease or cure the pain

He gave me my name and taught me His Holy Name

He protect me from His enemies\* and mine, both are the same

He protect me as the pupil of His Eyes with love and pain

And I grow under His wisdom and care

As I am His and I will always carry His Holy Name

He gave me the armour I need for my battle in life

And He let me go on my way aiming for life

In the way He designated for me to have a life

With His blessings that lead to eternal life

He is my Father and I will happily carry, honour and glorify His Holy Name

[\* Note: God's enemies are my/our sins as in Psalms 40 and 41.]

# The Sower and I

*(Reflection on Mark 4:3-8, 14-20 [Parable of the Sower], Luke 13:6-9 [Parable of the barren fig tree when it becomes fruitful])*

*Thank You Father for creating me on good soil and for making me hear your call.*

*Thank You Jesus Christ for giving me Your Sacred Heart (Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity) to be the good soil I was covered with when I heard Your Word, and for accepting to water me with Your Holy Water & Blood flown from Your Side to enable me to absorb all the riches of the Good Soil; be strong, fruitful and worthy to be called "Child of God".*

*Thank You Holy Spirit for preparing my good soil with all its fertilizers and organic materials; a good soil, rich of heavenly virtues of My Father's Spirit, The Spirit of Truth.*



***"O Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make our heart like unto Thine". Amen.***

*St. Alphonsus deLiguori*



# A Call For Holiness

*(Reflection on the readings: Matthew 19:3-15, Joshua 24:1-29, Psalms 16, 118 and 136)*

In Jesus Christ teachings regarding divorce, which one of the following is true?

- Jesus Christ assumes all men have hard hearts.
- Prior to His time, all men have hard hearts and He will change them to become meek and humble.
- Men need to change their hearts, and the disciples found it hard to change.

How hard is it to change? And do we change our behavior by our own will or with God's interference?

The history of God's chosen people clearly puts God's Hand (Providence) in every move they did without any effort from their side other than their belief in Him and their will to follow God and obey His Word.

Divorce seemed to be a very common thing to do, so that the disciples found it hard to accept that there should be no divorce, although it was the first thing God forbade in His speech with Adam and Eve. And, Jesus Christ, wanting all things to go back to how they were in the beginning where everybody is made in the Image of God, an image that can be found in the pure hearts of little children, He wanted to make marriage a sacred sacrament lived with holiness from both, the husband and the wife, so that they can be fruitful.

In the Old Testament, God spoke to Moses and asked him to tell the whole community to "be holy for God is Holy" (Leviticus 19:1-19, 20:8-16). In the Gospel, Jesus Christ, God's Word, said to the whole community the same words with higher standards (Matthew 5:1-48). Such holiness is understood in the following aspects:

1. The Relationship between People and God: Not to worship another God; keep God's law and put them into practice; fear God out of love for Him, to ourselves and to others; keep His Sabbaths and reverence His Sanctuary.
2. The Relationship between Children and their Parents: Respect.
3. The Relationship between People: Love of neighbor (friend or enemy) as oneself (treat them with justice, fairness and kindness, love and mercy), no hatred for anyone in the heart and be open in telling others about their offenses.
4. The Sexual Relationship: Only between husband and wife. In Deuteronomy 22:13-29, virginity before marriage and faithfulness in marriage is a must otherwise the sinner will be stoned to death (i.e., commit a sin (adultery or rape) that he/she will be judged before God).

Jesus Christ explained that it is the Mercy of God that allowed Moses to allow divorce, as God knew the weakness of men and their hard hearts [where blindness and stubbornness of the heart is one of the reasons for division as it creates ignorance that will lead to separation from the life of God (Psalm 81, Ephesians 4:17-18)]. This hardness of heart is shown in Jesus' parable (Matthew 22:2-14) regarding the invitation of the king for his son's wedding feast, where some of the invited people, caring only for their desires and wealth, they preferred to reject the invitation and spend their time in things that will increase their wealth, while others insulted the king's servants and stopped them from inviting other people. They were ungrateful to the king, in addition they didn't care for his feelings and share his happiness (this act just shows that they did not acknowledge the king (God) and love him above all matters or even fear him, accordingly they did not want to work for God to spread the good news and build His Kingdom in the hearts where the food in the feast is to do God's Will (John 4:34)). Again, in this parable, Jesus Christ is calling the people: (1) to ignite God's Love in their heart, (2) not to close their ears and harden their hearts when they hear His Voice (Psalm 95:7-8, Hebrews 3:7-15, 4:6-7), (3) repent, and (4) wear holiness/righteousness being the garment required to attend the wedding.

In another parable (Matthew 13:1-23), Jesus Christ explained that there is more than one kind of heart in the human race:

- (1) A dull heart who doesn't understand the Word of God so he can't be fruitful,
- (2) A stumbling heart who cannot stand firm to God's Word especially when faced with difficulties and becomes unfruitful,
- (3) A selfish heart who, because of the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, ignores God's Word and becomes unfruitful, and
- (4) A humble and compassionate heart which acknowledges God and His Word and wishes to please Him and becomes fruitful.

Again, Jesus Christ is opening our eyes to ourselves and asking us to identify the nature of our heart and act on changing it to become holy.

In Luke 15:7, Jesus Christ tell His followers (the people who came to listen to Him who were mainly sinners) that there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. Jesus Christ explained that He came for sinners to repent. In Saint Paul's first letter to Timothy 1:12-19, he said with full confidence that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners as he was a sinner and was saved. How does a sinner repent and what happens to him? He believes in God's Word and acts accordingly (James 1:22-25); his love to God and others will come from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith (Acts 24:15-16, 1 Timothy 1:5). In other words, a sinner will repent and leave the life of sin as Jesus Christ declared (Luke 13:3-5 and John 8:11), and try to become holy and compassionate so that he will be called God's friend (Matthew 5:1-12, Psalm 101, Romans 6:12-23, 8:1-17).

Our behavior and the way to holiness are determined by answering the following:

- Do we understand Who is talking to us (who is inviting us to the wedding?) (Isaiah 43:3, 11-12), and what is He asking us to do?
- Do we realize that Jesus Christ is the Word of God?
- Do we understand “God’s Love and Mercy” in relation to Jesus Christ being our ‘Redeemer: The Holy One of Israel’ (Isaiah 41 and 42)?

What are we but a mix of feelings in the heart and the mind: happy, sad, secure, insecure, love, hate, jealous, thirsty, hungry, full, greedy, humble, arrogance, pride, clemency, anger, anxiety, fear ... etc. Our actions and behavior are the results of these feelings; and God’s graces to us are to give us faith, wisdom of heart and mind, courage, perseverance, self-control, patience, kindness and gentleness, modesty, holiness as the virtues of the Holy Spirit. In Saint Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians (12:20-21), he urged them not to have the following among them: wrangling, jealousy, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, intrigues, backbiting, gossips, conceits, disorder; and to stay away from uncleanness, fornication and lewdness; in other words he is calling them to holiness by acts.

As Christians we come to understand God’s gift to us, God’s Love & Mercy, i.e. Jesus Christ, is our means and His providence to change our hearts and put on ourselves a new self (Ezekiel 36:26-27), created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24). Though it seemed hard at that instant for the disciples to understand how is it possible to change the state of the heart, but nowadays as followers of Jesus Christ we know that it can be achieved through our belief in Him (by giving Him thanks, praising Him and trusting Him), and our will to follow God, obey His Word, and attach ourselves to Him in Heaven and in the Holy Eucharist, this is our striving to enter from the narrow gate, the gate of virtue (Psalm 118), to be holy in our families and with each other. Consecration of oneself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (The Spirit of Truth) with contrite heart (Romans 8:1-17, Psalm 51) is the first act of adoration to God and sanctifying ourselves.

*Thank You Father for in Your Mercy and Clemency You didn’t let us die. You took our hand and led us through the narrow gate since no one can be holy, but by admitting our mistakes and weaknesses You strengthen us with Your Providence in what Jesus Christ did for us throughout His life, and with the guidance of Your Holy Spirit.*

*“O Holy Soul of my Savior, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, transform me. Water flowing from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesus hear me. Within Your wounds hide and shelter me. Suffer me never to be separated from You. From the evil enemy defend me. At the hour of my death call me, and bid me come to You, that with Your saints, I may praise You for all eternity. Amen.” (✠ Saint Ignatius of Loyola)*

# Humbleness:

## (1) Humble Workers

*(Reflection on Luke 10:1-9, Matthew 20:1-33)*

The first 72 workers sent into God's harvest field were given instructions on how to distinguish between the good harvest to be (so that they can take their time on improving it) and the bad (not to waste time on it) directly from Jesus Christ; and they lived themselves the wonderful results they got by following His instructions.

Jesus Christ asked His workers to test the hearts of the people by going to them in the form of a lamb (weak and helpless) asking for help, and by seeing their reaction [knowing that if they were sent as wealthy people then people will always welcome them expecting a payment in return].

Seeing two people, after traveling from town to town, bare footed and with no food, no purse or bag would indicate that they are poor or beggars asking only for food or money after saying 'Hello'. If the person who opened the door was kind hearted, generous and loved doing acts of mercy (i.e. a son of peace), he would welcome them, provide them with food and shelter for the period required for their rest without thinking that these men will not be able to give him back anything in return. On the other hand, a man with a hard heart will not provide them with anything (especially they are two men not one, leaving no doubt to fake a kind heart).

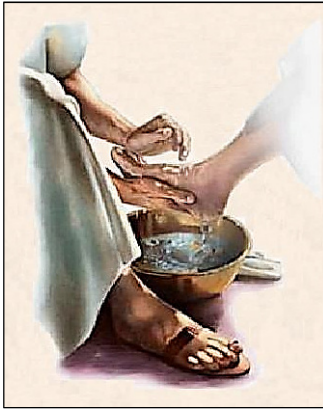
Also, Jesus Christ asked His workers to be humble in spirit in order to gain the trust of others so they will accept what they preach, and not to look like they are scavengers, looking for their own benefit. To accept what is offered from food and by not going into another house the next day would indicate to the owner of the house that they are not after better food or shelter; they are poor not only from the outside but are satisfied with what they get (they are not better than the residents of the house; i.e. humble in spirit). In time, and through the power given to them by Jesus Christ (i.e. graces from God which are the only thing they need in their journey), they will be able to heal the sick in the house and announce the coming of the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:1). And from one house the whole town will know about what has happened; just like the Samaritan woman who informed her town about Jesus Christ and they all believed.

People are divided into two categories: Lambs and Wolves; where lambs know the sound of their Shepherd and follow Him when He call them either by

Himself or through other Lambs within the same flock. The outcome of the workers proved that there are more lost lambs than wolves and all that is required is more workers. And, '**Humbleness**' is the key used to enter into the manger, where Jesus Christ was born, in order to see Him and go out glorifying and praising God (Luke 2:1-20).

For the new workers, God's graces are given through the Holy Spirit; and with prayer for what is needed from gifts, they can be good workers in His Field, i.e., '**His Kingdom of service to others**' so that everyone will know God.

*O Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Lord of the Harvest, who is thirsty for our souls, please kindle more hearts to work into Your field wholeheartedly. Amen.*



## (2) The Courage To Kill Pride

*(Reflection on Matthew 5:44-45, John 13:1-35)*

To what extent are we willing to become sons of our Father in Heaven??

In order to really become a follower of Jesus Christ we need to be able to forgive others (relative/friend or enemy) from our hearts when they ask for forgiveness as many times as it takes, where forgiveness is considered as an act of mercy and an act of love (the same love of God and Jesus Christ to us) if not to be taken as obedience and following Jesus Christ's teachings.

For some reason, some people can't see or admit their mistakes (even though they are faced with what they did) and accordingly won't say sorry. In this case, we need to forgive and turn the left cheek, after being struck on the right one, to be struck again and again. From one side, it is pride that makes a person unable to say sorry; and from the other side, it is also our pride that

makes us unable to turn the cheek. A priest said it takes courage to forgive from all of our heart. Yes, it will need courage to stand in front of God and ask Him very humbly to empty ourselves and let Jesus Christ fill our hearts with His own Loving Heart; to tell Him that we are weak and poor and without Him we can do nothing; so we ask Him with full confidence (knowing that He will respond) to fill our hearts, enrich us with His Spirit and dwell in us (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

*Turning to You Father, I see the courage of Your Son Jesus Christ shown in going to and accepting His suffering, while knowing who He is, just to obey You; and at the same time praying for His enemies to be forgiven. O Father, give me the courage to kill the pride in myself and deny myself (not only the pride created from seeing myself better than others due to wealth, wisdom, knowledge, social/work position, etc., but also from thinking that I don't want to suffer any more while You have suffered and forgiven; for how can I be better than You? Or even to judge Your Wisdom and ask why things happened and deny Your will), be obedient to Your teachings, forgive others and be as humble as Your Beloved Son for "it is enough for the student to be like His Teacher, and the servant like His Master" (Matthew 10:25). In Numbers 12:1-13, Miriam and Aaron questioned Your Will, in having Moses speak Your Word to them after he sees You face to face, and Moses so humbly asked You to forgive them and You did.*

*Please God, don't let the anger and pride in me blow a wind on the candle You've enlightened with Your passion and love. Lord, You are the flame of my candle that provide me with light and warmth through my journey in this dark tunnel until I reach the end of it where Your Light and Glory shine forever. Teach me Lord to accept others as You accepted me, a sinner, and to deny myself and carry my cross and follow You into Heaven (Matthew 16:24). Strengthen with Your pain my personality, not in the way the world sees a strong personality (becoming a wolf), but in the way that pleases Your Eyes so as to become one of Your children: merciful, meek, humble, compassionate and to offer myself for the sake of others (becoming a lamb). Amen.*

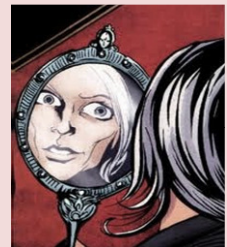
**Did you know that the worst enemy to God is:**

**"Selfishness, i.e. Loving oneself only"**

**as He is The Father of all, and He wanted to change this enemy to a friend by changing this love to be:**

**"Loving the Spirit/Soul of that self"**

**Where the first kind of love is Arrogance while the other is: "Loving God"!!**



# Salt of Earth

## ‘Better To Be Safe Than Sorry’

In Mark 9:41-50 and Matthew 18:1-35, Jesus is talking to His disciples as well as to anyone who wants to be His follower, i.e. whoever wants to put in himself a real salt that works as preservative material for his soul as well as for others’ souls and gives taste and meaning to their lives, that were created by God to do His will, and to be an example for others to follow. Jesus showed them the reward/punishment for any **act** and gave them His advice, so that their salt will not lose its saltiness towards themselves and others (Matthew 5:21-48).

### 1. A salty act towards yourself and others at the same time

From the Holy Bible, we come to understand the Justice and Love of God, and how He teach us to love Him, love others and treat them with justice. To understand ‘Sin’ we need to understand that in the Ten Commandments, if the first four are not obeyed, then the person has sinned against God only by being disobedient to God’s Commandment(s); the rest of the Commandments have two aspects regarding sinning:

1. Against God by disobeying God’s Commandment(s), and
2. Against the person(s) whom we performed the sin on (affected by the act thus affecting the purity of his/her soul) because we didn’t love them as we love ourselves; e.g. adultery will affect the wife/husband and the children if any and the other person involved in adultery, killing a body will affect the relatives of the dead, killing of the soul will affect God (all souls belong to God) and the person himself, ... etc.

Now knowing that: (1) God is the Creator of our bodies and He blew in us from His Spirit to give us wisdom and life to our souls, (2) when we sin our soul dies, and (3) God is Just, then we will understand that it is because of His Love and Jealousy for us (Isaiah 9:5-6) He don’t want to lose any to Satan: He forgave our sins by Jesus Christ’s death on the cross (i.e. His Love) provided that we should NOT:

1. Hold any soul from the reward of returning back to God by holding their sins against us (John 20:22-23), and
2. Cause others to sin, thus their soul will not return to God. In this case, and by applying Justice of God (shown in His golden rule: “*Treat others as you would like people to treat you*” (Matthew 7:12, Luke 6:31), and “*Love your neighbor as yourself*” (Mark 12:31); implying: ‘Love/Do for others whatever you love/do for yourself’), then also our own soul will not return to Him because of our behavior towards others (Luke 17:1-2).

Accordingly, God will forgive the sins of whoever forgives others for the sins they’ve committed against him/her for the sake of “God’s love is for all and He love everybody” (as Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins). And by forgiving others, you will also be saving their soul from

being condemned for that sin, as people will be judged according to the sins that other people hold against them.

The act of mercy in giving water to others in Jesus' Name symbolizes forgiveness, mercifulness, purity and life. He, who does that act, is considered to be a follower of Jesus Christ and his reward will be great: Forgiveness of sins and eternal life. **Being merciful and forgiving others from all our hearts is like receiving the Living Water from God's Hands, understanding fully His Forgiveness and Love, and giving it to others.**

## 2. How to put salt in ourselves and keep its saltiness

Jesus tell us that everyone will sin and pass through the process that either leads to holiness (become followers of Jesus and be salt that provides saltiness to others) or evilness (salt that loses its saltiness has no use). To abide to Jesus' teaching (To love God and love each other), a struggle in one's conscience to do right will create in himself a **set of actions and behavior based on his/her love to God** (i.e. salt) that would return his/her soul back to God and stay away from the fire of the feeling of losing God forever.

Sinning is an act that happens when we are poor in spiritual love, i.e. poor in the knowledge and love of God, so that when we are faced with trials, we let Satan control our minds and hearts, and he makes us forget God's Word, thus keeping us away from God. Satan uses our weak human desires for that purpose.

Acknowledging our sins, and knowing the cause of them (thinking or actual doing), asking God and whoever we sinned against for forgiveness, and having true sorrow for them and a firm purpose of amendment will keep the saltiness of the salt in ourselves and put us on the right track for eternal life with God; in other words: it will put back our love for God in our hearts above all things. Otherwise, when our bodies die we'll find our souls burning in Hell (where sins cannot be forgiven anymore) by the fire in the hearts of our souls for not seeing God forever.

**'Forgiving others from all of our hearts'** is one of the acts to tell God that we love Him from all of our hearts. To **'ask for forgiveness'** is to walk humbly with God as He is the only one who is Righteous.

In Middle Eastern Countries, the tradition is that people say to anyone whose pride they feel makes him think he is better than others: "You will not lose any of your body's parts if you come down from your high place, as God is the only One on High".

*Dear God, have mercy on me and make me understand that I am worth nothing in comparison to others, and my heart will be pleased to walk humbly by Your Side to serve You through others. Amen.*



# The Loving Son

*(Reflection on the Readings of Acts of the Apostles 20:17-27, Psalm 40, John 17:1-11)*

When someone wonders about how much God love him, then a faithful follower of Jesus Christ would tell him: “Look at the Cross, and you will see God’s love for us, the love that Jesus Christ talked about in Saint John’s Gospel Chapter 3 verse 16: **{For this is how God loved the world: He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life}**”.

Now, if this man re-questioned this Christian, and said: "What about the love of you, the son of man, to God; how can it be?", then what would the answer be?

Perhaps the most beautiful scene, to demonstrate the love of any human to God, can be taken from the life of Jesus the Nazarene, i.e. Son-of-Man, when He knelt in prayer to His Heavenly Father on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46), and He sweated blood to authenticate His Covenant with God at that moment and He said: **"Let Your Will be done, not mine"**. At that moment, His Soul was filled with sorrow to the point of death (Matthew 26:38), like the sorrow of a faithful man who committed sin and thought that he would be cut-off from the tree of life. This sorrow was not because He was going to die, as He knew this, and He had told His disciples three times earlier about what would happen to Him and that He is the Messiah (Matthew 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:17-19), but because He became weak, and His weakness would sadden His Father when all His aim of His life is **‘to please His Father by doing His Will, i.e. obeying His Word’** (1 Samuel 15:22-23, Psalm 40:8-9, Luke 2:41-49). By asking God to let the cup of pain and awful death to pass by, He would dishonor God’s Holy Name [i.e. **“The One who keep His Promise”** (Numbers 20:1-13)] before others, and question the credibility of His Word as He is **“The Redeemer of Israel, The Holy One of Israel”**.

As humans, we fall a lot in this kind of trial, a trial that Jesus Christ asked us to stay awake and pray in order not to be put to it; a trial that makes us act in a way that differs from what we preach, e.g. our preaching about forgiveness, sacrifice, generosity, ... etc.; a trial that will make us run away from fulfilling God’s Will in our lives especially if we know what God want from us to do, and this will shake the credibility of God’s Word in the hearts of the people surrounding us especially if we were connected to God through a strong relationship and are found always in prayer. In such situations, we are actually doing a disservice to God more than harming ourselves. This kind of trial requires from us a great love for God and deep steadfast faith with an alive

conscience [i.e., watchfulness to all actions to keep it holy] to say “let Your Will be done”. For example, when love dies in our heart because of much abuse or when being persecuted or humiliated, and knowing that God’s Will for people is to love each other as He loved us, then we would forgive and pray for the increase of love and faith in the heart of our abuser, in order to be a mirror of God’s love and to show His Glory to others by being obedient to His Will with complete trust.

On the Mount of Olives, Jesus Christ fell on His knees as if submitting Himself to God, and we can imagine hearing Him saying: “*Let Your Will be done, not mine*. Here I am, kneeling with my hands behind my back so that You can tie them with Your Will and take me wherever you want. I surrender totally to You, and I do this because I love you and the credibility of Your Love for the world is all what I wanted”. So, we too can show our affection for God in all situations we are experiencing: death, poverty, disease, disagreement between a married couple, persecution, ... etc., and surrender to what God allowed to happen in our lives and obey His Word, and say “let Your Will be done” without contempt. Such love can be felt with the words of Saint Paul to the elders of the church at Ephesus, saying that he has surrendered his life to God and has become compelled by the Spirit to do God’s Will with joy, i.e. proclaiming to all nations the entire plan of God (Acts 20:17-27) for God’s Glory.

In the Old Testament, all believers loved God and were scared that they would not be united with God because of sin (i.e., the enemy), their hearts were filled with sorrow and their tears wet their pillows; so they confessed their sin and repented (Psalms 6, 31 and 32). After the New Testament, the true believer who loves God grieves at his sin not because he is scared that sin will separate him from God as he knows that he is in the heart of God, and that God have forgiven him through His Beloved Son if he felt remorse in his heart and truly repented; and for sure he will have eternal life in God’s Kingdom as he has great hope in the resurrection. Accordingly, the true believer’s sorrow within the soul comes for the following reasons, where like His Teacher Lord Jesus, his intimate wish and goal is "to please God and glorify Him":

- (1) Because of his sin, he saddened his Heavenly Father and tarnished the Name of Almighty God in front of others,
- (2) Because of his sin, Jesus Christ suffered the pain of scourging (Luke 12:47), and crucifixion, and
- (3) Because he sinned; and since believers believe that they have strong faith and can stay away from sinning, so they grieve their weakness if they sin.

The people of Corinth were sad when Saint Paul deplored their actions in his first letter to them, and showed them what kind of sins they’ve committed, and

accordingly they understood it and did not insist that what they were doing was not wrong, but listened to him and rectified their wrong behavior; how blessed they were. Nowadays, there are people who do not feel that they are sinning, nor grieve and be sorry, but cling to what they are doing, and say that they are close to God and in union with Him!! Is this how we love God? What behavior makes God happy: A behavior out of a stubborn arrogant heart (Psalm 36:1-3), or a behavior out of a humble heart? When we read in the Holy Bible that there is joy in Heaven when sinners repent (Luke 15:7) and God is not pleased when man sins and does not repent (Ezekiel 18:23), this indicates a sadness in heaven while sinning; and accordingly we can understand the reason why Our Heavenly Father declared about Jesus Christ, saying: "*This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am pleased*" (Matthew 3:17), as Jesus Christ was sent to us for the purpose of restoring the lost sheep, and He did this out of His Love for God and for His Glory, where God's Will is that all souls are to be saved.

*Our Father in Heaven, please fill our hearts with a steadfast love for You, so that we can say what it is written in the scroll of the book in Psalm 40 verse 8 about Your Son/Children: "My delight is to do Your Will; Your Law, my God, is deep in my heart". Amen.*

## *Following Jesus (1)*



He who wants to ride on the colt and follow Jesus should echo what the Lord Jesus, Son-of-Man, said through the words of the Prophet Isaiah (50:4-9):

*"The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them. Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame. He is near who upholds my right; if anyone wishes to oppose me, let us appear together. Who disputes my right? Let him confront me. See, the Lord God is my help; who will prove me wrong?"*

# Perseverance

*(Reflection on Psalm 68, Acts 20:17-38, John 17:1-19, Luke 8:15)*

Politicians, when they decide to form a new party with new ideas which are not acceptable by the current governing party and would like to change the existing government, would keep in mind the following saying: “When we selected this path, we knew that the gallows tree is a ladder to Faith” that means to expect execution, without fear, because of their beliefs.

Both Jesus Christ, Son of Man (Lamb and a symbol for His Followers), and Saint Paul, the Apostle, knew [through the Holy Spirit] that they would suffer a great deal in order to fulfill God’s will for them as part of making Him and His Word known to the whole world so that it would be saved. They both obeyed, out of love, till death. Both of them had the choice to select between suffering (that will lead to spreading God’s Glory and make Him known to non-believers), and quitting; yet they chose the pain, realizing that ‘it is Love of God and the eternal life with Him’ that matters. Their love for God is beyond imagination. Jesus Christ already knew God and He wanted His followers to love God and love others as He loved His Father and us, i.e. even to suffer and die for our sake (The sign of God’s Love to us).

Saint Paul loved God from first sight and became so deeply in love with Him to the point of becoming a prisoner of the person he loves (God: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit) and follow Him blindly doing whatever He requested to please Him. Some selected people see God directly, others through seeing (believing in) Jesus Christ. Saint Paul became blind with the Light of the Transfigured Jesus Christ in the sense that though he saw his coming suffering (whether through the Holy Spirit directly to him or through the virgins and a man who had the grace to prophecy), but the Light gave him the necessary strength to walk the path of salvation with perseverance and without fear or care for himself. It was difficult suffering yet acceptable as it was not only for his salvation but also for others, and mainly for the love of God. This perseverance (in this case it is the fruit of seeing Jesus Christ as God) is a beautiful grace from God that reflects to others the strong bond between God and His children, and how great is the love of the children for God and their trust in Him. A love that is characterized with:

- A wholehearted sanctified love,
- Obedient with joy until death,
- Sacrificing love that always says “Here I am” and never say “what about me”,
- An armed fighting love without being afraid of any person or doing harm to anyone.

Children of God (the people who heard God’s Word and have a noble and generous heart) will have such love for God because they know that not only do they need to carry the cross with its suffering for Jesus Christ Name and for the church that He purchased with His own blood, but they are sure that they will shine in His Presence in Heaven. In His preaching on the Mount, Jesus Christ said: *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in Heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.”* (Matthew 5:10-12). For this reason, we can praise God as in Psalm 68, and add: *“O widows and orphans of the New Jerusalem rejoice and exult for the glory of your husbands/fathers is in the presence of God”*.

For the followers of Jesus Christ, He is the head of the family of one body; He is an example that needs to be followed. For them: trusting Him and allowing Him to take care of them and lead them through their deeds, words, and thoughts will be a complete surrender to God’s wisdom; will be a new birth through water and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8). His love [the Love for God and to others] is what ties them together.

The followers of Jesus Christ know that their heart would need to be a fruitful tree, a tree that requires a lot of time, effort and patience (perseverance) from the sower (i.e., the owner of that heart) to become so especially if it was nearly dead (a heart of stone). And, to be more precise, this tree needs to be like an Almond Tree, the watchful tree, which will take care of itself knowing that its fruit will feed the hungry. Thinking of Aaron’s rod that was a dead branch and bore fruit with God’s Power (Numbers 17:16-25), we come to understand that it is only with God’s Power (Love and Mercy, Word and Acts) that we can become a fruitful tree.



Figure 1 - A dead branch that was left on the ground over a plastic bag and found alive with a new bud formed on it **after one year**. No roots were formed. Imagine how much water it needed to grow!!

*O Eternal Father, earth is full with dry wood and requires water to become green to stand in the way of the fire of the evil spirits. Pour out heavy rain to strengthen our faith, and unite us with the pouring of Your Holy Spirit who make us prisoners to Your love. We ask this in the Name Of Jesus Christ Your beloved Son who reign with You and The Holy Spirit One God. Amen.*

# Carry the Cross of Body & Soul

*“My Yoke Is Easy & My Burden Is Light”*



Going into the church, the first thing I see is the Big Cross and I ask for mercy; what I hear inside me is “What more than this?”. That is the cross (that became for us the sign of Love & Mercy for our souls) that Jesus Christ asked His followers to carry in their hearts, and act accordingly to follow Him into Heaven (Matthew 16:24). It is the same cross that He attached Himself to with nails; the same cross that made Him endure all the pain caused by the insults, spits, scourging, crown of thorns, ... etc.; and that cross is “The Love of His Father and doing what pleased Him” by restoring us back to Him, i.e. Love of God and others.

As Christians understand that they are human beings, of body and soul; then accordingly, there is a cross for the soul and a cross for the body:

- The soul’s cross engraved in our hearts is the teachings and commands of Jesus Christ; i.e. The promise of having eternal life with the Glory of God through the obedience out of love to our God and doing His Will to please Him whatever this will is, for every one of us; and such love is shown by our merciful actions to others. Whether His Will for us, as disciples, is to be leaders, priests or parents, we are asked to be pleasing children to Him and pass our faith to our children faithfully and wholeheartedly.
- As for the cross of the body, it is anything we should endure (emotional and/or physical pain) and accept if it cannot be healed, saying “O God, Your Grace is enough for me” (2 Corinthians 12:9) knowing that it is with God’s Grace we became God’s children.

For real disciples, the souls’ cross will turn gradually their hearts into a meek and humble heart just like Jesus Christ’s Heart Who always helped in reducing the weight and burden of the cross of the body. That is why you can hear Jesus Christ telling all who are sick (in soul and/or body) now as He told them earlier: *“Come to me, all you who weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden*

is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). Part of Jesus Christ’s teachings is the Mercy of God on our souls through the Holy Eucharist (during the Last Supper), and this makes the burden on our souls so light knowing that our sins are forgiven through ‘The Lamb’.

Many obstacles face us during our journey, but we endure them as a sign of our love for God and for our souls. So if God said “*what is joined by God cannot be separated by man*” or what He explained regarding divorce; then this is exactly what it means. And if divorce occurred then it means one of the partners have sinned and has put a stumbling block in front of the other. The church always advises its children to stay away from sin and carry the cross of listening to (i.e. obeying) Jesus Christ’s Teachings, and to endure and do (accept) God’s Will for the sake of God’s Love. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are to endure what we cannot heal/change (e.g. persecution, emotional pain, physical pain, etc.) so that the cross designated for us by God (as Christians) will not fall from our shoulders, and so we can follow Jesus Christ into Heaven.

Every bodily cross has a different weight. For example, for Jesus Christ, the weight of the cross was the pain caused by our sins on His Holy Body to heal us; for the woman having a problem with her husband, it is the way her husband is treating her; and for the disciples, it is the rejection of non-real-Christians who apply God’s Law or other man-made laws for their own sake. Accepting sickness or death as God’s will, forgiving others from all of our hearts, and serving others (in other words: acknowledging God, walking humbly with Him, and doing acts of mercy) is because we love Him and we keep ourselves nailed to that cross. **Obeying Jesus Christ’s teachings reflects our love for God.**

If entrusting Jesus Christ’s Teachings is considered a bearable/light cross on our souls and accordingly on our bodies; then on the other hand, sinning (i.e. disobeying God’s Word and distrusting Him) will put a heavy burden on our souls. In God’s Mercy, we know that if the cross slipped from our hands, we can still carry it again by repentance and confession with a really contrite heart, and humbly asking Jesus Christ through the Holy Eucharist to restore us and to put the cross back on our shoulders, and even to help us in carrying it by increasing our love for our Father in Heaven to exceed our love of ourselves. As Son of Man (i.e. a symbol for us), Jesus Christ had Simon from Cyrene (who was coming from the field) to carry the cross for Him (Matthew 27:32, Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26), so we can also ask Jesus Christ (the owner of the field) to carry the cross for us.

Our body works for our soul (by mastering the desires that lead to sin (Genesis 4:7, Acts 24:15-16, Ephesians 4 & 5 & 6, James 1:14-15)), and our soul works for our body (through the Holy Spirit, the Holy Eucharist and God’s Word); such work is like the puzzle of the one who comes first: the hen or the egg?? Though, as Followers of Jesus Christ, we know that the hen was created first and inside it the egg to be fruitful and have more of its kind, in the same way

we believe that the 'Breath of God' is poured in our soul and body first in order for us to work and be fruitful. The harder the body works (Romans 6:12-14), the less is the weight of the burden of the cross on our souls and at the same time the more the cross is attached to the soul. Furthermore, when the soul thirsts and works hard to please its Creator (i.e. we open our hearts to God and ask Him to come in), then the Holy Spirit will enkindle in our hearts the Love of God and fill it completely with such love so that the soul will be completely nailed to the cross, and this will make the cross of the body so light. As in the miracle at the wedding of Cana, Jesus asked the servants to fill the jars (hearts) with water (God's Love: 'Faith in Jesus Christ as the Redeemer' poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (Romans 5:5)), and they filled them to the brim (Wholeheartedly to love The One God, no space for another) and after that when they served it to the president (God), it became wine (we became God's Children covered by Jesus' Blood) (John 2:7-10). Accordingly, our actions will reflect what our hearts feel and is filled with; as Jesus Christ said: "*Good people draw what is good from the store of goodness in their hearts. For the words of the mouth flow out of what fills the heart.*" (Luke 6:45).

All of us (disciples/followers) should seek only pleasing God which requires a good understanding of the Gospel through the church and the family. This understanding will also stop the violence/'wrong behaviour' in response to violence/'wrong behaviour', therefore 'Sin' can be wiped out as it will die before it fruits by loving and forgiving.

*Our Heavenly Father, Your Breath is the origin of all creation; help us to be faithful to You by pouring into our hearts Your Love that gives us the power to be Your Children, Followers of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## *Following Jesus (2)*



He who wants to ride on the colt and follow Jesus should believe that God sent Jesus, called Son-of-God and Son-of-Man, saying: "It is too little for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; **I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the Earth.**" (Isaiah 49:6), knowing that Jesus is sending him/her to be a light to the world (Matthew 5:14), to proclaim the promise of salvation in Jesus Christ to the ends of the Earth (Mark 16:15-16). **Yes, to be a servant through obedience to the word of God with all his/her mind and capabilities, and a son through loving God, "The Almighty Father of All", and loving others, "brothers in Christ", with all his/her heart.**



# The Sinner ... The Saint

*(Reflection on the Book of Ecclesiasticus; Letter of Saint Paul to Titus; Philippians 2, 3 & 4, Psalm 27, 112 & 122, Luke 14:25-33, Luke 16:1-15, 1 Corinthians 3:9-17, Romans 8, Letter of St. James, John 2:13-22, Luke 17)*

Some people might see Jesus Christ's teaching for his followers to hate their father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters and even their own life to be so out of the question, to be so opposite to his teachings about loving each other and forgiving each other, yet these words cannot be understood with their right meaning without reading his full message: To carry their cross and follow Him.

As explained in the previous article, the cross is "Jesus Christ's Teachings" that is "God's Word" that we need to love, know and understand in order to be able to discern the right teachings from the wrong, in order to stand in front of the one who is doing a wrong behaviour that displeases God with courage and complete confidence no matter what the relationship is between that person and us, or even his/her position. Accordingly, if we want to build a tower (i.e. a pure heart as our aim is to see God in Heaven (Matthew 5:8)), then the calculated cost will be "God's Word" that will enable us to build the tower whether in a short or a long period.

As Christians, we can live our lives without realizing that we are not doing what Jesus Christ actually have asked as to do, for example:

- We can enjoy ourselves without taking care of the poor, and the poorest of all poor people is the one who is standing at our door waiting for us to open it to Him, i.e. Jesus Christ, who also said that He is thirsty and He need from us to offer Him our hearts along with our attentive ears;
- We can work hard to provide for our families enough money to give them a good standard of living, yet we forget to take them to church or read to them the Holy Bible;
- We can argue and fight with our partner/parents/relatives on any subject and put an end to our relationship without remembering Jesus Christ's teachings about forgiveness, or end up having a relationship that is not based on Jesus Christ's teachings;
- We can make 'Money' as the motive of our lives;
- We can easily be, with our actions and behaviour, a stumbling block in the path of the faith of others;
- We can easily forget our duties towards God and towards the people surrounding us (our parents, partner, children, etc.);
- We can easily have a stubborn heart that will blind our eyes from seeing our own mistakes.

As Christians, we understand that living with a polluted body will yield a polluted soul; and most of us can have an unpolluted body with polluted spirit [people with a lukewarm love for God, that is, not “on Fire” so they cannot love others (Revelation 3:14-22: Church of Laodicea)].

### **What are the things that pollute the body and accordingly the spirit?**

The desire of the heart and of the eye --- this, if it is earthly desires, then it can lead to loving earthly riches more than God, lying, stealing, adultery, covetousness of other people’s possessions, disobeying God’s Word, killing (1 John 2:15-16).

### **What are the things that pollute the spirit without polluting the body?**

To obey the Ten Commandments but without doing loving and merciful actions (acts of Charity: Proclaim God’s Love; provide shelter, drink, food, clothes and money to the poor (bodily and spiritually) [not loving your neighbour/others (the people in need) as you love yourself]). In other words: to be spiritually unfruitful.

‘**Washing away the things that pollute the body**’ is to turn the desire of heart and eye towards Heaven, and wisely invest in whatever gifts (money, intelligence, courage, etc.) that is given to us; and in this case this will automatically sanctify the spirit [even if you are called now ‘The unfaithful Stewart’].

‘**Washing away the things that pollutes the spirit**’ is to change your heart to be thankful to God, compassionate, sacrificing, meek and humble as Jesus Christ’s Heart (Matthew 5:1-48), i.e. to be born of Spirit (to put the Word into practice, i.e. to be filled with God’s Love through the Holy Spirit and act accordingly (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)), and this will sanctify the spirit in addition to the body.

Yes, we are Christians but somehow our own cross is cracked, a crack that can divide the cross in two parts, as we have no complete understanding of our Faith and do worship other things along with God. And, in our hearts there is only lukewarm love for God. Every time we sin (with or without knowledge), the crack in our cross increases and our remembrance of God fades until we start living just like anyone else who doesn’t know that God exist. It is from this kind of living that God want us to be baptized and washed clean. God, and so should we, would like to see a solid healthy cross on our shoulders where our actions would come out of Love and not just as duties towards God and others (Philemon 8-9).

If we can imagine/admit this cracked cross, then we will feel so sad, upset and worried and ask God to do something, ask Him for His Divine Providence. This feeling is what is called repentance, the feeling of sorrow for becoming like this, and the wish to become nearer to God; a repentance that will lead to a promise to God that we will not go back to our previous actions. Then, we will

see a White Linen cloth amending the crack of our cross, keeping both sides together in good times and bad times (i.e. at the times we break that promise, at a time of distress He will save us by His forgiveness), and giving strength to us to stay like that forever (i.e. to continue to strive to keep our promise to God). This White Linen cloth is the Resurrected Jesus Christ, His Holiness, and God's Love for us. Living like this, i.e. in God's Love according to Jesus Christ's Teachings will change our cracked cross, our life and we will not be living in our bodies any more but Jesus Christ will be living in us (we will see ourselves as the person who is crucified on the cross); and as followers of Jesus Christ we will be God's Children who build His Kingdom in their hearts (on earth before in Heaven) and their hearts will be His Temple from where He will shine to others. And when the time comes, we, in our new bodies, will shine in the Glory of God and join the Seraphim, the Cherubim, the Angels and all souls in Heaven in praising God with the universal word: "Halleluiah, Halleluiah, Halleluiah".

Understanding what Christianity means will put in our hearts a humble spirit that will say when it does its duties and receives words of appreciation that all thanks is to God as we are only doing our duties: A servant to others, as My Master was to me.

*My God, Heavenly Father, by the power of Your Holy Spirit lead us to the fullness of Light and Truth and let us taste the sweetness of the true wisdom of Your Word and be embraced always with Your Divine Providence in Jesus Christ Your beloved Son Who reign with You and The Holy Spirit One God. Amen.*

## **The Sun & The Moon**



*My Lord, My God, on the day of Your Beloved Son's transfiguration, You showed me that He is the Sun of the World, and now I tell you that I am a Dark Moon in itself that enlightens to others according to the faith I have within me, according to the rays of the love of Your Son that I reflect to others. I thank you always, and ask You to let my light be as the light of a Full Moon not Crescent, I ask this in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.*

# Glory Be To God

*(Reflection on the Book of Ezekiel, Luke 1:26-56)*

Our Blessed Immaculate Mother Mary, as a daughter of God, loved Him and glorified Him, and she became the mother of The Word that came directly from His Heart; His Son Jesus Christ, Who humbly came as a human to complete the work God gave Him to do (i.e. fulfill God's will) thus glorifying God in Him (John 17:4-5) as God glorified Him when God said *"This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him"* (Luke 9:35). As one with God, Jesus Christ came to show us what God's Heart feelings are to whoever acknowledges Him, and asked us as His followers to show the same feelings to each other: *"As I loved you, so you must love one another."* (John 13:34-35)

By giving Glory to Jesus Christ, i.e. obeying His Word, we acknowledge Him not only as God's Word: Son-of-God, but also the Son-of-Man: the Symbol for us whom God sent to the whole nations (the Israelites and the Pagans), as God sent Ezekiel to the House of Israel. We are to follow His footsteps and imitate His feelings and actions; and by doing so, we are sure of our resurrection as what has happened to Him will happen to us. As Son-of-Man, Jesus Christ surrendered His life totally to God, His Father and our Father, and accordingly He had no specific place to stay in as it was according to His Father, His whereabouts (Matthew 8:20). As Son-of-Man, He will teach us what His Father taught Him and do the actions that would please His Father with complete trust that His Father is always with Him (John 8:28-30) and so we should be.



*O Blessed Mother Mary, your "I am the Lord's servant" is my first lesson from you in teaching me how to give Glory to My Father in Heaven, My God. Your act of obedience to His call, and actually fulfilling His will in you, resembles what you said "My soul glorifies the Lord", as His Word and Commands are to be obeyed above all considerations. Your tender feelings and hard work towards your relative Elizabeth during her pregnancy, though you yourself were pregnant, teach me how to stretch God's Hand of help and His love through my being there to others.*

*O Holy Mary, Mother of God, please pray for me that I can love others with all my heart, and turn my enemies (if any) into relatives and friends by acts of love, so that we can all become one body with Jesus Christ Your Son as the 'Head of the Body' and its 'Pure Heart' glorifying God by word, thought and deed. Amen.*

*O God, make me a feather in Your Hands and a feather in Your wind, not knowing what to say or write or where to go but completely surrendering to Your Will for Your Glory. Amen.*

# Temple for God

*(Reflection on Luke 19:1-10; where "Zacchaeus made haste and received Jesus joyfully", Psalm 84)*

God, through His Teachings, invite us to be His children:

- *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).*
- *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).*
- *"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12).*
- *"Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9).*
- *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he can't enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh (human nature) is flesh (human), and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5-6).*
- *A person whose spirit has not been born of God is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1, 5).*

Eureka, Eureka. Any person who would reach the conclusion that in order to:

- keep Jesus Christ's teachings and fulfill them (Luke 9:35, Matthew 7:21; 10:16-33);
- carry the cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24);
- put on him Jesus Christ's yoke because it is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:29-30),

then he/she must have "Jesus' Sacred Heart" with all His feelings: "The Love to His Father and doing what pleases Him (which includes the love to God's children)" instead of his heart.

This new heart will make our bodies a temple for God and lead to a living conscience that will provide:

- words of thanks and praise to God, wisdom, consolation and comfort to others, ... etc. that comes out from the mouth,
- sinless thoughts that come from the mind, and
- love from the heart through all actions.

This new heart will make us repent, give away everything considered to be of earthly riches, and follow Jesus to be a servant for others. Our actions shall be a reflection of His Goodness, an image of God's Love to be seen and felt by others. This new heart will make us as new born children who put all their trust in their Father. This new heart is born at the time of Baptism in The Name of The Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit.

*O Lord, turn our hearts towards Your love and make us surrender to You as it is through Your Sacred Heart we will go into Heaven. All praise and thanks is Yours now and forever. Amen.*

# The Christian Life

*(Reflection on the readings of the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time: Nehemiah 8:2-6, 8-10, Psalm 19, 1 Corinthians 12:12-30, Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21)*

What differentiates a religious group, that has a common belief in their heart forming one body for the good of all, is the way they pray and fast; and this also applies for Christians. The disciples and the followers of Jesus Christ asked Him to teach them how to pray as John the Baptist taught his followers how to pray and He taught them “The Lord’s Prayer”; and Jesus Christ said that as long as He is on earth His followers need not fast, but they will do so after His Resurrection (Luke 5:33-35).

Both praying and fasting are a way of worshiping God, and Christians need to worship Him with their spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). To pray with their spirit is not to repeat words without acting by them; and to fast with their spirit is not to stop eating certain foods but to repent, stop sinning, and fast the way that glorifies God, so it will be a blessing for them (Isaiah 58:1-14). To worship in truth is to have Jesus Christ’s Spirit, as He is The Way, The Truth and Life. All His life (His miracles, His preaches, His prayers, His death ...), Jesus Christ was praying and fasting the way God wanted; what He was anointed for was to show that **God is Love**, knowing that throughout the ages, God’s Love for us and His teachings are given to us by “actually living” them. Even the only prayer Jesus Christ gave us, i.e. “The Lord’s Prayer”, He Himself lived it; His life on earth for 33 years was like reciting it once:

1. Glorifying and loving His Father by sanctifying His actions thus reflecting His Father’s Holiness to others,
2. Surrendering, with complete trust, to His Father’s will,
3. Proclaiming the Kingdom of God when hearts are born from the Holy Spirit; a Kingdom of Service to others out of love for God’s Glory,
4. Feeding daily on fulfilling the work assigned to Him by His Father,
5. Loving us to the point that He sacrificed Himself so that we will be holy and perfect as He is,
6. Asking His Father to forgive our sins, and
7. Putting His Sacred Heart with all its feelings towards His Father and towards us in the Holy Eucharist to be our daily bread for both our bodies and souls.

Living by the words of ‘The Lord’s Prayer’ is to live the Christian faith, to live in love with God our Heavenly Father, sanctifying our actions as His Name is Holy and we represent Him as His Children (i.e., we are His Image to others), working together in harmony filled with the graces of the Holy Spirit to establish God’s Kingdom on earth [A Kingdom that can be identified by a “Kingdom of Service” where everyone uses the gifts that God gave him/her for

the benefit of others for God's Glory], listen to God's Word to open our eyes and share His Meal (where our food is both Jesus Christ's Heart in the Holy Eucharist, and doing God's Will) with joy, rebuke the evil spirit of hate by forgiving (2 Corinthians 2:5-11) [an act that will tell God that we admit that He is Just and we love others as much as we love ourselves and want to give them clothes and a shelter under His Tent as Jesus Christ did for us], and putting our spirit into God's hand trusting that He will save us from evil by empowering us with His graces as the Power, Glory and Kingdom is all His forever.

In church, nowadays, we still gather to listen to God's Word to open our eyes, and also to offer our Sacrifice of Thanksgiving and of Forgiveness to God in the same place, thus fulfilling the words of Jesus Christ when He told the Samaritan women that "*The hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem*" (John 4:21). Going to church and worshiping God at the Holy Mass is also a kind of praying 'The Lord's Prayer' in action. The sequence of the actions is more or less as follows:

1. Come to church (acknowledge God: *Our Father in Heaven*) as members of one family with one Father filled with His graces to be His heirs/children (*Kingdom of God*),
2. Praise and glorify the Holy God with hymns and prayers (*Holy is His Name*),
3. Stand and kneel humbly with pure hearts in front of Him inside the church as the angels and holy souls do in Heaven (*His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven*),
4. Admit our mistakes and be sorry (implied within: *God forgive our sins*),
5. Listen to God's Word and receive the Holy Eucharist (*God give us our daily bread, that is our offering for the forgiveness of our sins*),
6. As Jesus Christ taught us that before coming to the temple with our offering, we should forgive the trespasses of others and their sin, and ask for forgiveness from those whose feelings we have hurt (*we have forgiven who has sinned against us*),
7. Receive God's blessings from the priest at the end (*protect us from trials and save us from evil for the Power, Kingdom, and Glory are all His*) in the Name of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit (Amen).

In Isaiah 58:6-7, God say: "*Is not this the sort of fast that pleases Me: To break unjust fetters, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break all yokes? Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, and sheltering the homeless poor; if you see someone lacking clothes, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own kin?*"; isn't this what Jesus Christ did to the people living at His time as He told John The Baptist (Luke 7:18-23), and to our troubled and poor souls, and accordingly God is pleased with Him (Matthew 3:17)? According to Matthew 25:31-46, aren't these acts what distinguish the people whom God was pleased with and have blessed (i.e., the sheep that are

on His Right in the Last Judgement) from others who did not do His Will (i.e., the goats on the left hand side)? Did not Jesus Christ say that the people who hear the Word of God and keep it are blessed (Luke 11:28)?

When Jesus Christ asked His followers to go and preach (by words and actions) the Gospel, He wanted them to pray and fast as He did, to live the life that He lived: a life of service to the body and soul of others for God's Glory, since His followers will be anointed to be God's Children (i.e., having Jesus Christ's Spirit).

No wonder that God has given His Day (the Sabbath) for the work to the needy, the poor, the troubled and doing acts of mercy (Mark 2:23-28, 3:1-6, Luke 14:1-5). This shows how much He love them, as instead of wanting people to do nothing on that day, He prefer that this time is spent on helping and loving each other on earth (as no one is rich), and then in Heaven they will have all the time to enjoy His Glory. And by sending us Jesus Christ and His death on the cross for our salvation indicates that all His Work is for us, because He love us, and He is Love.

*O Jesus Christ, when I sinned and became prisoner to Satan and stood in shame (without clothes) in front of God as Adam did, You visited me and washed my sins away, granted me forgiveness, and dressed me with the gown of holiness; thank You. O Jesus Christ, when I was hungry, You came and fed me with the Bread of Life: Yourself; thank You. O Jesus Christ, when I was thirsty, You came and gave me the Living Water: God's Graces, Love and Mercy through The Holy Spirit; thank You. O Jesus Christ, when I became blind and strayed away, when I was burdened with sin, You came and opened my eyes and took me by the hand to the shelter that You prepared for me in Your Father's House; thank You. O Jesus Christ, use me to lead others to Your Heart; to take God's Word to the sick to be cured; to give them from the Living Water that You gave me for God's Glory; to do for them what they cannot do for themselves. Amen.*

*O God, since 'A life in service to others is a life in service to You', please inspire us to live a Christian Life with Your Beloved Son's Spirit dwelling in our heart, and increase our Faith, Hope and Love. Amen.*

**Beware of Temptations ...  
They can hook you to an  
unpleasant ending.**



**Love, Sex, Money, Ego, Fame,  
can be a piece of chocolate in a trap.  
BEWARE, ASK FOR ADVICE.**



# Prisoner of Love

*(Reflection on the life of Saint Paul)*

There are people who pass through our lives and they become nearer to our hearts; people for whom we can create an image based on their writings, and who unbeknownst to us, will have a great effect on our lives.

One of these people who has a great influence on millions in all generations is Saint Paul, the Apostle, who loved God from his childhood; he loved Him in the beginning, as he said on himself, as a love of a child, and dedicated his life to serve God and fought for God's Glory with perseverance, and he was faithful in his fight for righteousness.

Just as many of his own generation, he could not see God's Glory and His Divine Light in the person of Jesus the Nazareth, but when he saw '**The Light**', God's love struck his heart and he became blind just as a lover who becomes blind with the love to his beloved and cannot see anything and anyone other than his beloved and he will have no fear or worry regarding any hardships or pain he will go through just to please his beloved, and this is the love of a man after loving God as a child (1 Corinthians 13:10-12).

Saint Paul wanted to be a true child of God, so God gave Him all the graces he needed. From his letters and journeys we see that he was a man of wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, piety, fortitude and the fear of God filled his heart. From his letters and journeys we live what Jesus Christ said: "*Love God wholeheartedly above all things*" and "*Love others as you love yourself*" as he wanted everyone to be saved through proclaiming God's Love and Mercy, our salvation in Jesus Christ. From his letters and journeys we learn how to love God: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit and become like the dough in the hands of our Creator or as a feather in His Wind or even a feather to His Mind for the sake of His Kingdom and building the one body in Jesus Christ.

And, I can imagine him praying to His Father, having Jesus Christ is in Him, and saying:

*Our Father Who are in Heaven, I wish You would make me one of the angels who are serving You; but if there is no place for me, then I wish You would accept me as one of the uncountable souls who kneel in front of Your Divine Throne; but if there is no place for me, then I wish You would make me a servant for these souls; but if there is no place for me, then I wish You would make me a sacrifice to be fed by all these souls so I can be part of each one of them and You will see me in every one of them and I will see You through every one of them. Amen.*

# Our Relationship With God

*(Reflection on Luke 8:5-15, i.e. the Parable of the Sower, Luke6:36, Matthew 5:48)*



"What is the problem with our relationship with God?" is a question asked by many, especially by priests when seeing some (or a lot I don't know!!) of the parishioners are not walking in the way of the Lord, i.e. according to the Word of God. Such a question is answered by the Lord Jesus in the parable of The Sower (Luke 8:5-15), where He gave an explanation to His Disciples that was an adequate answer for anyone who asks himself about his relationship with God, what is it? And how should it be?

God's Word, "The Seed", doesn't change, it is the same for everyone, but understanding, absorbing and working by it varies from one person to another according to one's relationship with God, and this relationship with God is based on his heart. One might think that he/she has a close relationship with God [i.e., the seed is merged in the soil with strong roots] but in time of trials he/she would fall whether he/she knows and admits that or not but God would know, for example, a woman may go to church every Sunday but gossips and talks about people throughout the week, or someone may spend a lot of money on himself but when seeing a poor man he/she can hardly give the coins in his/her pocket if any (trials that show the goodness of the heart and its compassion and love for others [e.g. The way people welcomed Jesus' Disciples when He sent them two by two; the way the rich man treated Lazarus the poor ...]; trials that show meekness and humility; ...).

A "kind heart" is the one who, from a young age, had drank 'the Love of God and others' through his community, his family and those around him, i.e. they made his soil (i.e. heart) moist and good, and saturated with the Living Water: "Love", thus ready for God's Word to be sown deeply into it, not on the surface, to grow and produce good work in obedience to the Word [where 'Obedience' is a mirror that reflects 'Love for God' to please Him (1 Samuel 15:22-23)], as seeds don't grow in rocky soil that has no moistness.

These loving and merciful hearts become ready for God's Word, i.e. to hear The Word and transform what they hear into action, as the seed is changed to become a fruitful plant. First the seed germinates under the right temperature

and moisture conditions and develops into a seedling having (1) fine roots [underneath the surface] that would absorb water from the soil, allowing the seedling to grow, as a sign of simple relationship with God, and (2) a shoot with leaves [above the surface] as a sign for simple actions due to faith; these leaves photosynthesize light into energy, allowing the plant to grow and develop. Both, the roots and the leaves, are the reason behind the growth of the plant. As the roots go deeper into the soil, the plant becomes stronger and more mature with bigger and more leaves, and this is exactly the case with our relationship with God: We allow the Word of God to grow into our hearts and minds when we offer ourselves to God and to His Will, putting all our confidence in Him by saying "Thy Will be done", thus allowing 'Love' to penetrate deep to the depths of our heart forming an intimate and strong relationship with Him based on knowledge and understanding. The more our love for God grows, through the obedience to His Word and not just verbally, persevering with patience despite the persecution of the world that lives in contradiction to the teachings of God, the more God would provide us with grace so that our actions become like a fruitful tree: An enjoyment for other peoples' eyes, fulfilling for the hungry, and rest for the weary; knowing that fruits are of different types, some for the body and others for soul, to satisfy the hungry and thirsty for the Word of God, to heal the sick, and to give freedom to prisoners. Working by the Word of God makes the Word/Gift/Grace given by God to man yield 30, 60 and 100 times (Mark 4:8).

When a tree grows and is fruitless [i.e. a lukewarm faith, only on the surface and not from the heart], the soil needs someone to turn it over and fertilize it with good food, and the tree may also need to be trimmed and have its sick or dead branches removed. In the same manner, the flipping and pruning of the heart is the process of "repentance" and "drawing closer with intimacy and avidly to God to hear His Word", a process which Jesus called for and emphasized on in more than one occasion, saying: "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear*". As for the compost and fertilizer, it is "the prayer to God asking for Divine Providence", and "acting the good deeds", and "fasting from sin". Our heart needs to be similar to God's Heart.

Man's relationship with God!!! "He who loves anything above God will not bear fruit, and he who loves God and gives himself totally to Him will bear great fruits" ... This is what Lord Jesus is saying in the Parable of the Sower who came out looking for the good soil, and He comes out every day. So, have we prepared it for Him? He is standing at the door, knocking and waiting there; do we open the door to Him and let Him in?

*My Lord and my God, I love you and concede to You to do as you wish with me for Your Glory, thanking You always. Come into my heart and through Your Holy Spirit change me to be a true child of Yours, meek and humble to accepting change, and loving and compassionate towards others where my actions reflect Your Love and Mercy to them. Amen.*

# The Healer

*(Reflection on the parable of the Good Samaritan: Luke 10:25-37)*



Jesus' parable that was given as an answer to the lawyer's question: "*Who is my neighbour?*" (Luke 10:25-37) shows us that a neighbour is the person who feels compassionate towards others who are weak and in need, and helps with all his might and capabilities, regardless of who the person in need is. We often limit ourselves to that, i.e. we try to **be compassionate towards others and treat them with compassion and mercy** and so to be as the "Good Samaritan", and we forget to read every detail within the parable in particular to know other specifications about this Samaritan to discover that he might be a rich doctor carrying with him money and first aid materials such as bandage for dressing the wounds, oil to soften bruises and soothe pain (Isaiah 1:6), and wine to cleanse wounds [as it was medically recognized in those days], otherwise he couldn't do what he did. The man who fell into the hands of bandits didn't need a spiritual man [a priest or a Levite experienced in Law] to heal his wounds, but at least he needed someone to feel sorry for him and take him to a doctor; while a person who is under the control of Satan and Sin [i.e. thieves of souls] must have a spiritual doctor for treatment. This doctor should have the characteristics of the Good Samaritan equipped always with everything he needs to help others: A kind heart, wealth, oil, and wine; and all these symbolizes the treasures of God "The Word" and His power that expel demons and soften the hearts of stone, bringing life into it; and after the initial healing he would entrust him to someone who can continue treatment/care until he is fully healed and becomes self-reliant.

Through the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Lord Jesus remind us of the care that God want His Flock's shepherds to practice to be like Him, as He declared: "*I myself shall pasture my sheep, I myself shall give them rest. I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the injured and make the sick strong. I shall watch over the fat and healthy. I shall be a true shepherd to them... I shall come and save my sheep and stop them from being victimised...*" (Ezekiel 34). Yes, He is, as Lord Jesus said, referring to Himself as "Son of God": "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy, I have come so that*

*they may have life and have it to the full. I am the good Shepherd"* (John 10:10-11); He was sent carrying in His Heart **God's lavish gifts: wheat, wine and oil** (Jeremiah 31:10-12) thus fulfilling in Himself "The Word Incarnated" and in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist [His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity] God's promise to send wheat, wine and oil for His people to eat and never be humiliated again [i.e. the forgiveness of sins, and spiritual satiation and healing] as God is in their midst (Joel 2:18-27). He is a physician who healed and heal the overburdened and weary with His Yoke and light burden (Matthew 11:28).

As sons of God and followers of Jesus Christ, are we spiritual healers ready to treat patients? Or, we see patients and leave them on the side of the road? "**Love is the basis of the medicine for every disease**", this is what God teach us in the entire Gospel as "God is Love"; so is our heart filled with love and knows 'The Word'??

*My Lord and my God, the giver of life, fill our hearts with the true love for the body and the soul to sanctify ourselves and to be compassionate towards others, with what You've granted us of Gifts and Graces, to live all together with You forever, and thank You always, Amen.*

## Chaplet of "Love"

### Opening Prayer:

I recourse to You, my God, at all times, in joy and hardship, and seek the wealth of Your Sacred Heart's treasure. I offer this Chaplet, for myself and for my family and the whole world.

- Sign of the Cross: In the Name of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.
- The Creed
- The Lord's Prayer: Our Father Who are in Heaven...
- Hail Mary ...
- Glory be ...



### On each Decade, we pray:

- O God "The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit", one God glorified and hallowed by "Love", have mercy on us. (x1)
- O Giver of Life, fill our hearts with "Love" to live with you forever. (x10)
- O Mary full of grace, the grace of loving God above all things, and loving others as yourself, pray for us. (x1)

**Concluding Prayer:** All thanksgiving is always to You O God, Amen.

# Raising of the Dead

(Reflection on Jesus Christ "The Saviour", Isaiah 65:16-21, and The Beatitudes: Matthew 5:3-11)

## "The New Heaven and the New Earth"



Who of us will not die in the flesh? And who among us does not believe that there is new life after death having illuminated spiritual bodies in a new heaven and new land that doesn't resemble this earth and heaven? And St. John the Evangelist, The Beloved Disciple, heard what Jesus, *who was dead and is alive for ever and ever, who hold the keys of Death and of Hades* (Revelation 1:18), had said to the Angel of the Church in Smyrna: *"Even if you have to die, keep faithful, and I will give you the crown of life for your prize. Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches: for those who prove victorious will come to no harm from the second death"* (Revelation 2:11), where the second death happens after The Last Judgement for whoever's name was not found in the book of life, where his/her spiritual body (i.e., the soul) would be hurled into the burning lake, that Death and Hades are hurled into (Revelation 20:11-15). Who doesn't know that Jesus Christ raises the dead in particular who die spiritually by sin? Hence, anyone whom Jesus Christ give him/her life while he/she is on Earth [lift his/her soul from sinful stage and fetch him/her out of Death and Hades though still in the flesh], He put him/her in a new heaven and a new earth (Isaiah 65:16-21).

In Psalm 51, man admitted that he is a sinner and asked God for mercy; he asked Him for a new clean heart with a resolute spirit, and God listened, as this is His Will when He created man on His Image (Genesis 1:27), and promised mankind through the Prophets to give him that heart if he repented and listened to His Word (Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:26-27, Jeremiah 24:7). In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ gave some characteristics of this new heart that will live with God under a new Heaven on a new earth (Matthew 5:3-11). And, if you asked: "What are these new Earth and new Heaven while we are still in the flesh on Earth?", then the answer can be found in the following prayer:

*My Lord and my God, whom through The Son, Jesus Christ, have created for me a new earth where its dust is His Body and its water is His Blood "Life", and a new Heaven where You are its Sun and Light, and the Holy Spirit is its clouds and Your Word is its Wind, and from this Body, Blood, Light and Wind the faithful/believer draws dominion over evil and healing spiritual diseases through the forgiveness of sins, thus they will become righteous all who are in the Heavenly Kingdom through believing in Him and living in Holiness on Earth according to this faith driven by the Word as a feather in the wind and shaded by clouds ... I love You, and my soul shall thank You, proclaim Your Greatness and venerate You forever.*

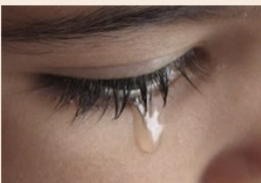
*My Lord and my God, whom allowed the Blood of The Beloved Son to flow as water on my heart's desolated land and refreshed it, and made my heart similar to His Sacred Heart: a good soil, "new earth", that bears deeds/fruit worthy and fitting of You ... I love You, and my soul shall thank You, and proclaim Your Greatness and venerate You forever.*

*O Beloved Son "The Innocent Lamb", whose drops of sweat became blood to authenticate my Covenant with the Heavenly Father telling him "Let Your will be done, not mine" (Luke 22:41-44), and by Your blood that fell had blessed the earth that was cursed because of innocent blood that cried out to The Heavenly Father from the ground (Genesis 4:10-13), thus changed into a new ground that fruits Holiness ... I love You, and my soul shall thank You, and proclaim Your Greatness and venerate You forever.*

*O Holy Spirit, who stirred in my heart "repentance" and "love", and connected my roots with the Divine Heart so that I feed from Him and grow on His Ground ... I love You, and my soul shall thank You, and proclaim Your Greatness and venerate You forever.*

*O God, The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit, The One God who loved me and sent for me meek lambs to lead me to Your Kingdom, please bless me so that I also would be a meek lamb to others leading them to you, and thanks be to You always, Amen.*

## **At Confession**



***I cried today at confession because  
I heard Jesus telling me through  
the priest:***

***I know you.***

***You can do better than this.***

# The Perfect Moment



One of the hardest things to do is to imagine oneself in front of Jesus Christ to be judged for what we did during our life on earth so that to receive either eternal happiness with Him or eternal sadness away from Him.

*An artist has drawn an image of the abbess Marguerite de Scornay of the Abbey of Nivelles in Brabant, Belgium (1443 – 1462). The abbess kneels before the seated figure of a crowned Blessed Virgin Mary, who holds the Christ child in her lap, his hand pointing toward the kneeling abbess.*

*Behind Marguerite, with right hand outstretched toward her, stands St. Margaret of Antioch with her symbol, the dragon, at her feet (note: St. Margaret is the abbess's patron saint). The three figures are shown on a tiled floor against an elaborate tapestry background consisting of branches and, if one looks closely, griffins.*

*To the left are two shields, each with a different coat of arms, these arms being impaled on a third shield centered above the figure of the abbess. One can assume that they record the arms of the abbess's parents. Two other shields, one with a bend, the other with a chevron, are at the right.*

*In each corner is a symbol of an Evangelist: in the upper left, the eagle of Saint John; in the lower left, the winged ox of Saint Luke; in the upper right, the winged man of Saint Matthew; and, in the lower right, the winged lion of Saint Mark.*





*The kneeling figure of Marguerite de Scornay, presented in a three-quarter view, clothed in the vestments of an abbess with wimple and veil headdress, hands raised in prayer, the pastoral staff between her arms and resting on her left shoulder. A scroll seemingly issuing from the abbess has in Latin the words of the prayer "Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me a sinner."*  
[[http://www.hamline.edu/brass/pdfs/pp\\_niv-bel\\_c1460\\_flemish\\_fac.pdf](http://www.hamline.edu/brass/pdfs/pp_niv-bel_c1460_flemish_fac.pdf)]

The same above image is used in this article as an icon (where icons are known to be a vehicle; its object is to transmit the supernatural, to help us see what is beyond) to give the viewer an idea about the perfect moment we meet God whether in prayer or when we really see Him in His Glory.

In the icon, God is represented by a baby sitting in the lap of His mother to indicate that the Divine God has come to earth and has taken our human nature. Please note that the woman is not God, as some people might imagine that God has feminine features; and this is not according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, as He called God "Our Father"; simply it is a blasphemy. Yes, God has a loving, tender and clement heart and these characteristics are not only for woman, even men have this kind of heart if they did not choose to harden it.

As Christians we have based our faith on what the four evangelists have written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit [represented by the four symbols in the four corners of the icon; each has a scroll in his hand representing His Holy Bible (These are the four chariots; the four winds of Heaven (Zechariah 6:1-8)).

The woman, kneeling in front of God in the middle of the page, represents each one in the church, and her hand's work that can be either according to God's Will [represented by the Angel holding the cross]; in other words: to listen to Jesus Christ's Word and work on it, or Satan's will, i.e. the will of the flesh [represented by the dragon]. Every one of us, as the Son-of-Man, has a free will to lay his life down and surrender to God to please Him in order to lift it up again (Ecclesiasticus 15:11-18, John 10:16-17, 8:29, 6:63). Everyone will be rewarded/ judged according to his/her behavior (Matthew 16:27, Revelation 22:12).

Normally, the one who succeed his father and become an heir to his father's possessions would have the same characteristics as his father in order to deserve becoming an heir. Throughout the Gospel, we see Jesus Christ showing and doing acts of Mercy toward others thus showing God's mercifulness to us. In Matthew 25, Jesus Christ distinguished between the one who enters God's Kingdom (the lamb) from the one who won't (the goat) by selecting the souls of the people who did acts of mercy to others; who used the graces God had given them to help the needy, who did what Jesus Christ did for others, who became merciful as their Father in Heaven is, who obeyed Jesus Christ's Word and did His Will as it is The Father's Will, who carried their cross and followed

Him (Matthew 16:24-26). To surrender to God's Will is to accept with joy all hardships that we face in our journey towards righteousness, and this is what Wisdom is, where hardships result from discerning the right teachings from the ungodly teachings, whether these ungodly teachings are initiated from inner self or from the surrounding people through the evil spirits. These ungodly teachings (whether cause leisure or painful feelings) are a big trap for the soul, but **the trust in the Lord and His Mercy and keeping His Word as 'our home to live in it and by it'** is The Way, The Truth and Life (Wisdom 2 and 3, John 8:31-32). To be part of the kingdom of the Son-of-Man is to have our heart filled with the graces of the Father sent to us through the Holy Spirit in Jesus' Holy Name and to act accordingly (as what was seen clearly by the actions of the disciples in the day of Pentecost, and Jesus Christ mentioned it to His disciples in Matthew 16:28 (It was only Judas who did not have the kingdom of God in his heart when he died because he did not understand God's Mercy and ask for forgiveness)).

In Deuteronomy 30:15-20 and Jeremiah 17:5-10, God bless everyone who obey His Word and put his/her trust in Him (believe in Jesus Christ), and cursed everyone who obey and put his/her trust in man or other Gods (i.e., money, self-indulgence, ... etc.). The blessing is having eternal life with God, and the curse is eternally staying away from Him (John 6:63). These blessings are beautifully given in the Beatitudes by Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:3-11) to anyone having the graces of the Holy Spirit and its fruits in his/her heart in order to build the Kingdom of God.

With the triumphed cross [in the icon there is an eagle on top of the cross in the hand of the angel], Jesus Christ defeated Satan. With the triumphed cross, multitude of souls have become holy. On the cross, "The Immaculate Conception", the name Virgin Mary gave Saint Bernadette Soubirous of Lourdes, France (in one of Her Apparitions) to indicate to herself, came to life, not only to mean that she is The One who was conceived at birth without original sin, but also she is a symbol for holy souls who are God's children and bride in His Kingdom; a symbol for the Church as communion of the saints; a symbol for the Kingdom in Heaven; the New Jerusalem that was conceived by the Blood of Jesus Christ, The Lamb. In other words, "The Immaculate Conception" signifies also her role as the Mother of the Church as she is the Mother of the First-Born-Child of this church; the Church who is born new through Water and the Spirit; who is born of the Spirit. This birth through an immaculate conception will make them Children of God; be part of the Kingdom of God in Heaven. This Kingdom, though its People's Holiness will shine in God's Glory to praise God with the angels, but it was through the earthly Jesus Christ, God's Love and Mercy, the Son of Mary, and by what He did on the cross, that it is conceived. All her children, purified by The Son, loved God as a Heavenly Father, trusted Him and surrendered totally to His

Will, carried their cross with joy and became His children on earth, thus creating God's Kingdom in their hearts (Luke 17:20) and souls before reaching Heaven. This church with its Queen and Mother is robed with the sun to give light to other creatures on earth (Revelation 12).

The angel with the cross in the hand and the dragon may also resemble what is said in Psalm 34:7: *"The angel of Yahweh encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them"*, and what Saint Peter wrote in the first letter (5:8) *"Keep sober and alert, because your enemy the devil is on the prowl like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour"*, respectively. With these images, they show that the tent that is referred to in Psalm 27:5 is God's Love through Jesus Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross: *"For He hides me away under His roof on the day of evil, He folds me in the recesses of His tent, sets me high on a rock"*.

In the icon of "Mary Mother of Perpetual Help" two angels are drawn behind Mary and Jesus holding the instruments used in His death: the cross and a lance. In this icon, the cross is not the sign of humiliation and death but it is a sign of our salvation and God's love for us. It is not a sign of weakness but it is a sign of power that defeats death (the Death of a soul as mentioned in the Book of Wisdom). It is not something that we will run away from, but a tool that we nail ourselves to in order to live.

*"The reason why Saint Margaret, an early Christian martyr, is identified with a dragon is because she was tempted by the devil in various guises, once as a dragon who would have devoured her had she not made the sign of the cross. Thus, by her example, she strengthens the spirit of others by her victory over the devil."* [[http://www.hamline.edu/brass/pdfs/pp\\_niv-bel\\_c1460\\_flemish\\_fac.pdf](http://www.hamline.edu/brass/pdfs/pp_niv-bel_c1460_flemish_fac.pdf)]

Humbleness is a great virtue, and God is pleased with anyone who walks with Him in humbleness; humbleness that will lead to wisdom and is derived from the fear of the Lord; humbleness that will make "obedience to God's Word" its only satisfaction. For a wise man will flee from sin, and if he/she sins, then he/she will not do it again and ask forgiveness for all previous faults (Ecclesiasticus 18:19-33, 19:1-3; 21:1-4) and trust in God's Mercy. God's Mercy that can be trusted even in the last moment of our life, just as what happened with one of the criminals who were crucified with Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ gave him pardon for his sins, while it was not granted for the other criminal who kept on abusing Jesus Christ (Luke 23:39-43). Insisting on not acknowledging God is pride, as pride is identified with stubborn heart (Ecclesiasticus 3:26-29). Accordingly, without any pride in the heart, we can all repent and change our wrong behavior (Ecclesiasticus 17:25-26), and pray the following so that God will welcome us into His Kingdom:

*"Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, King of kings, have mercy on me a sinner, and grant me Your pardon. Amen and Amen."*

# Conversation Between My Conscience & My Soul



- Conscience : ..... (Silence)
- Soul : Knock, knock.
- Conscience : .....
- Soul : Knock, knock.
- Conscience : Who is there?
- Soul : I'm your soul.
- Conscience : What do you want?
- Soul : I'm hungry, I'm thirsty, I'm sick, I'm cold and it is too dark in here.
- Conscience : Well, I don't feel anything. I'm fine, and I have lots of food and drink. I have all I need to make me warm and it is up to me to turn the light on or turn it off.
- Soul : What about me? Have you forgotten me?
- Conscience : Um, may be ... may be. I'm so busy with others and I don't think I'm hurting you.
- Soul : I feel so sad that you are not doing anything for me or taking care of me.
- Conscience : Well, if I take care of my body then I am taking care of you.
- Soul : You are wrong. Your body will die and turn into dust and it is me who will live forever with God. I need food to survive; I need medicine to be cured. I need light to show me the way to eternal life.
- Conscience : I can't understand. I have heard these words before, maybe from my parents, maybe in the church. And it has been a long time since anyone reminded me about you.
- Soul : You have neglected me. Don't blame others. I feel so weak, help me, I'm dying.
- Conscience : I promise I'll ask for help and this time I'll work hard to bring you back to life. I'll open my heart to accept all advice.
- Soul : Thanks. And remember: If I'm alive, I will in turn put life into your children's soul.
- Conscience : Wow. What a big responsibility I have. I should also tell my friends.

# The Image of the Christian's Heart: LOVE



*My Lord and my God ... You've said to your prophet Ezekiel: "I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put My Spirit in you, and make you keep My Laws." (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Thank You for Your Divine Providence and Graces: "Jesus Christ" who imprinted Your Love in my heart and changed my entity to 'Love' that reflects Your Love to others so that they thank You and extol Your Holy Name. Thank You God for teaching me to love You above all things, and with **prayer** [in speech and deed, in flesh and spirit] I can be nearer to You. Thank You for teaching me to persevere in **fasting** [in speech and deed of body and soul] from impurity and sin which separate me from You, to control myself and its earthly desires as a sign of love to myself that will only be glad with You in Your Kingdom in Heaven. Thank You God for teaching me to have mercy on others through **charity** [in words and deeds for the flesh and spirit] as an indication for my love to them as I love myself. Amen.*

## Stumbling Block



One of the advices that Lord Jesus Christ gave to His disciples:

*"Causes of falling are sure to come, but alas for the one through whom they occur! It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round the neck than to be the downfall of a single one of these little ones. Keep watch on yourselves!"*

(Luke 17:1-3)

# Ambassadors for Christ: Trees of the Forest

*(Reflection on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to the Corinthians, Letter to the Galatians, Psalms 24, 96)*

*Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all trees of the woods will rejoice before The Lord.*

*Psalm 96*



Followers of Jesus Christ, the servants who wait for their master to come, will:

- Reflect the glory of Christ (i.e., His Love, Mercy, and Righteousness), who is the Image of God (Colossians 1:15) by loving and treating others as God loved us and servicing them with a meek and humble spirit (John 15:12-17).
- Enlighten others with the knowledge of God's glory, the glory on the face of Christ; thus renewing human nature day by day (2 Corinthians 4:1-7).
- Proclaim the message of reconciling the world to God through Jesus Christ (Luke 9:60).
- Stand firm in every kind of hardship, guided by the same Spirit of Faith (James 1:2-27).
- Wash themselves clean of everything that pollutes their body and spirit (i.e., turn the desire of heart and eye towards Heaven, fill their hearts completely with God's Love, give themselves to God and His Children, and become spiritually profitable), bringing their sanctification to completion in the fear of God (Romans 6, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, Mark 7:20-23, Matthew 12:33-35).
- Be filled with encouragement and overflowing with joy (Colossians 1:9-12). And by doing so, they will have their belts done up and their lamps on (Luke 12:35-40, Matthew 25:1-13), and become a fruitful tree (Luke 13:6-9).

[Note: In the above picture: the trees have the shape of faces of men (side view) looking to the heavens towards the top-left-side of the picture and praising God. The tree in the middle is higher and hidden behind a lookalike of a dead tree as Jesus Christ's Radiance was hidden behind the scourged dead body on the cross. In front of it there is a resemblance of a crown as if the tree is Jesus Christ, The Humble King, who have come to live between His people taking off His crown because He love us.]

*O God, give us the honour to be ambassadors of Your Love and Mercy and to be a mirror of Your Glory, we ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*“Finally, grow strong in the Lord, with the strength of his power. Put on the full armour of God so as to be able to resist the devil’s tactics. For it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the principalities and the ruling forces who are masters of the darkness in this world, the spirits of evil in the heavens. That is why you must take up all God’s armour, or you will not be able to put up any resistance on the evil day, or stand your ground even though you exert yourselves to the full. So stand your ground, with truth a belt round your waist, and uprightness a breastplate, wearing for shoes on your feet the eagerness to spread the gospel of peace and always carrying the shield of faith so that you can use it to quench the burning arrows of the Evil One. And then you must take salvation as your helmet and the sword of the Spirit, that is, the word of God. In all your prayer and entreaty keep praying in the Spirit on every possible occasion. Never get tired of staying awake to pray for all God’s holy people, and pray for me to be given an opportunity to open my mouth and fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel of which I am an ambassador in chains; pray that in proclaiming it I may speak as fearlessly as I ought to.”*

*St. Paul (Ephesians 6:10-20)*



*"Unless you are born from above  
you will not enter the Kingdom of God"*  
Jesus Christ (John 3:3-6)