

A Humble and Concreate Heart

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle B

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Mark 1:14-20

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they abandoned their nets and followed him. He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets. Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.

Introductory Prayer:

Lord, I thank you for this time to be with you. I don't deserve your close friendship, and yet you offer me the intimacy of your heart. I trust in your goodness and hope in your infinite mercy. I love you and wish to give up anything that would keep me from you.

Petition:

Lord, give me compunction of heart and the grace of a true conversion.

1. Prerequisite of the Kingdom:

"The kingdom of God is at hand," "The kingdom of God is within you," and "You are not far from the kingdom," are all expressions of Our Lord. He came to establish a kingdom, one that would begin here on earth and continue on into eternity. We build the kingdom within ourselves by practicing virtue; we allow God's grace to purify us from selfishness and vice and to build us up in faith, hope and charity. There is, however, a pre-requisite for grace to begin and continue to work its ongoing miracle: acknowledgement of our failings and belief in Christ. We must "repent, and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). Am I aware of my constant need to turn to God and turn from my daily sins? Can I truly say that I'm striving to overcome my sins and faults so that I can be more like Christ and closer to him?

2. Interior Sackcloth and Ashes:

The type of penance that Jesus seeks must begin in our interior. When Peter becomes aware of who Christ is, he falls on his knees and exclaims, "Leave me, Lord, for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8). "Jesus call to conversion and penance, like that of the prophets before him, does not aim first at outward works, "sackcloth and ashes," fasting and mortification, but at conversion of heart, interior conversion. Without this, such penances remain sterile and false; however, interior conversion urges expression in visible signs, gestures and works of penance" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1420). The best "expression in visible signs" of conversion and penance is our imitation of Christ. The apostles "abandoned their nets and followed him" (Mark 1:18).

3. Venues of Conversion:

In Number 1434 of the Catechism we learn that conversion and penance are not things we embrace only once or only after serious sin, by going to confession and then leaving them aside. "The interior penance of a Christian," rather "can be expressed in many and various ways". Fasting, prayer and almsgiving are mentioned as venues for expressing our ongoing conversion. Other more specific ways are "efforts at reconciliation with one's neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity "which covers a multitude of sins." Does my heart resonate with these ways, and if not, why not? What could be more important than an intimate friendship with my Lord and God, with whom I hope to spend all eternity?

Conversation with Christ:

Jesus, my days are booked up with so much activity and noise that it's extremely hard for me even to reflect about my need for conversion of heart. Please help me to turn away from my sins and bad habits by turning to you and imitating you. Wash me of my sins, and draw me close to you.

Resolution:

I will meekly apologize for having offended someone without touching on anything negative about that person.