

2019.11.10

Today's first reading about the seven Jewish brothers really inspired me, because they are wonderful examples of an uncompromising devotion and love for the heavenly Father in the midst of trials. The context of the story is that Antiochos Epiphanes, a pagan king, invades Israel and forces the Israelites to break the Law. The seven brothers courageously stand in front of the evil king and their torturers, who try to force them to eat pigs' flesh, which the Law forbids, but because they are so devoted to God their hearts are filled with His love, with His courage and with His strength, so they refuse to break the Law. These young men fix their eyes completely on their loving God, and His promise of resurrection. Their spiritual eyes are almost fixated on this greater reality of life, and it transforms their thinking, and as a result they profess in the face of death that it is better to die and to be raised up to eternal happiness than to break the Law and be condemned to eternal death.

I believe it is very important to remember how positively it affects your thinking and decisions when you are completely dedicated to friendship with God, and you see your relationships with people with God's eyes, and focus 100 percent on His promises including the resurrection, and not merely on the day to day issues and challenges of life. November, during which we pray especially for those who have died, reminds you to shift your main attention back to heavenly realities.

Do not get used to the habit of focusing merely on earthly things, on what other people think about your words and actions, but rather be obsessed with what God the heavenly Father thinks of you, and then you will stop defending yourself. Let Him defend your cause. Do not be too focused on seeking the pleasures of this life and as a result forget and stop caring about the salvation of your soul. Be rather focused on the building up of your spiritual relationships with God and with God loving people. You need to live always with the awareness of Christ's return, so that your heart is always ready to welcome Him whenever He returns.

Going to Church is a vital reminder of that greater reality of life and of the unconditional love of God the Father. Many people go to church only for baptism, or before wedding, or for the sacramental preparation of their children, and as soon as they have received what they wanted, they disappear from the church, because they think they have no time for church, because they have to focus on the cares and worries of their lives, not really trusting in the loving providence of our heavenly Father, and sadly the next time they return to church is in their coffin, when their funeral service is celebrated!

Another thing that can really make you spiritually blind and forget about the greater reality of life is the media. The TV and the radio are full of news, most of which don't really affect your life, or some only affect it temporarily, but they say ALMOST NOTHING about the connection of your daily life and eternal life. Many of us spend many hours in front of the TV watching empty

programmes, most of which have nothing to do with the most important story of your life, that God has saved you from bondage to your sins, and so you are free to live as a child of God in an intimate friendship with Him, and that He has a mission for your life. **THIS IS** the real story of life, and **THIS IS** why it is so important to read the Bible on a regular basis, and the Church's teaching. So you need to come to Church as often as you can; to hear your Father's voice through Jesus. If you can't come to Church, read the Bible at home and listen to your heavenly Father's voice at home. He loves to speak to you, He is your Father and not just a distant deity. There are also many good films and stories on Youtube that inspire you and focus your attention on God and His reality, and even Christian cartoons that you can show to your children.

So as we come close to the end of the Church's year, which symbolises the end of salvation history let's shift back our focus to the ultimate goal of our life journey, to the things of Heaven, to eternal happiness with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and think and make decisions in terms of this ultimate goal of life.