

## **Week Two/Day Three: *Free from Sin***

### **1. Place yourself in God's presence**

**2. Ask Him for the grace you seek:** *to acquire knowledge of yourself and sorrow for your sins.*

### **3. Today's Meditation:**

*My sin is always before me* (Psalm 51:3).

Looking at Mary's virtues as in a mirror, today we should focus on her purity. She is the Immaculate Conception, free from all stain of sin, original and personal. Purity for Mary is not only an absence of lust, but also an absence of all sinfulness. If we want to truly know ourselves, then we must come to terms with this aspect of our human reality: unlike Mary we are sinners. Nevertheless, like Mary we need God's grace. It was by a special grace alone that Mary was preserved from all stain of sin. If we want to reach such a purity of heart, mind, body and soul in imitation of her then we must come to this double realization: I am a sinner and I need God's grace.

*I am a sinner.* Let's be honest with ourselves, how many of us would really write that in our personal descriptions? When Facebook, Instagram, personality quizzes or applications ask us to describe ourselves, how many of us would say, "I am a sinner"?

Yet, that is what we are: sinners. Some may think this is a pretty pessimistic outlook...a depressing description of oneself, yet, in reality, it's liberating. Only by recognizing ourselves as sinners can we travel the road to freedom from sin.

This was true for the tax collector in the Temple (cf. Lk 18:13). Unlike the Pharisee who thanked God for his lack of sinfulness, the tax collector stood there beating his breast and imploring God's mercy saying, "Be merciful to me a sinner!"

Which one went home "justified"? The sinner (cf. Lk 18:14). Only the sinner was freed from his sins and went home "justified".

The same was also true for Peter (cf. Lk 5:8) who after confessing his sinful condition was granted a place among Jesus' closest friends.

Let us not forget the sinful woman or the good thief on the cross. They too acknowledged their sinfulness and in doing so found a Savior in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

*I need God's grace.* We might not share the first condition with Mary, but we do share this one with her. Mary's Immaculate Conception was a work of grace—"preventative grace" we can call it. Through her immaculate conception, Mary was preserved from all stain of sin, not on account of her own goodness, but on account of her role as the Mother of Christ. If Mary needed God's grace to be free from sin, then we too need His grace to reach that same freedom. In our struggle to overcome temptation and sin we should never lose sight of our need for God's grace. It is not enough to simply avoid occasions and make resolutions; we need to ask, seek, and receive God's grace. Sinfulness is not humanly possible without it.

Some people think sinfulness is impossible in this life. They are somewhat correct. If we claim to have no sin then we are liars. It is impossible to avoid sins of weakness or failings due to our imperfections, but it is possible to avoid deadly sins: principally mortal sins and secondarily deliberate venial sins.

A life free from mortal sins and deliberate venial sins is possible in this life through grace. This is something we ask for every time we go to Mass. After the Our Father, the priest prays on behalf of

himself and all God's people, "Deliver us Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that by the help of your mercy, we may be *always free from sin* and safe from all distress." If a life free from mortal and deliberate venial sins were not possible then this is a worthless prayer. But can any part of the Church's greatest prayer—the Mass—be worthless and in vain?

Mary is sinless and in need of God's grace. We are sinners and in need of God's grace. Unless we are careful we can easily lose sight of the second truth as much as we lose sight of the first one.

If we find ourselves making very little progress in our spiritual lives, it might be that we are not being humble and honest with ourselves. It may be that we are trying to work towards holiness as if it entirely depended on us, when in reality it depends entirely on God's grace at work in us. Mary's holiness rests on God; ours must too. The desire for holiness, however, begins by recognizing our need for it and that all starts only after we can humbly say, *I am a sinner*.

*Questions to guide your meditation:* If "humility is to walk in the truth" as St. Teresa of Avila defines it, have I really acquired humility if I do not acknowledge myself as a sinner?

Read Psalm 51, what does it invoke in your own heart and conscience? Is this the vision you carry about yourself? What is Mary's place in reference to this Psalm? How would she have prayed it?

Grace? Do I understand it? Do I appreciate it? Do I seek it daily?

#### **- Today's Prayer -**

*HAIL, O Star of the ocean,  
God's own Mother blest,  
ever sinless Virgin,  
gate of heav'nly rest.*

*Taking that sweet Ave,  
which from Gabriel came,  
peace confirm within us,  
changing Eve's name.*

*Break the sinners' fetters,  
make our blindness day,  
Chase all evils from us,  
for all blessings pray.*

*Show thyself a Mother,  
may the Word divine*

*born for us thine Infant  
bear our prayers through thine.*

*Virgin all excelling,  
mildest of the mild,  
free from guilt preserve us  
meek and undefiled.*

*Keep our life all spotless,  
make our way secure  
till we find in Jesus,  
joy for evermore.*

*Praise to God the Father,  
honor to the Son,  
in the Holy Spirit,  
be the glory one. Amen.*