

June 19, 2024

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

"MY SACRIFICE, O GOD, IS A CONTRITE SPIRIT"

By Sr. Katherine "Kit" Gray, CSJ

Today's Gospel

Jesus said to his disciples:

*"Take care not to perform righteous deeds
in order that people may see them;
otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.
When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you,
as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets
to win the praise of others.*

Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

*But when you give alms,
do not let your left hand know what your right is doing,
so that your almsgiving may be secret.*

And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

*"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites,
who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners
so that others may see them.*

Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

*But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door,
and pray to your Father in secret.
And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.
“When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites.
They neglect their appearance,
so that they may appear to others to be fasting.
Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.
But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,
so that you may not appear to others to be fasting,
except to your Father who is hidden.
And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”*

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-18

Reflection

Today’s passage from Matthew’s Gospel continues the Sermon on the Mount; in it, Jesus teaches “the crowds” and us about prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. He says that all these are to be done “in secret” and that the Father “who sees what is hidden will repay you.” We hear this Gospel on Ash Wednesday, and I am struck by the contrast of hearing “anoint your head and wash your face so that you may not appear to others to be fasting” and then our foreheads are marked with ashes--clearly an “outward sign” that can draw attention to ourselves. However, a more thoughtful reading of the passage leads me to understand that Jesus is getting at my attitudes, motivations, reasons for doing these things—prayer, fasting, almsgiving.



Man Praying at Home
Photo by Monstera Production

For Pondering

- What is my reason for praying, doing good to others, fasting?
 - How does Jesus' admonition to do things "in secret" challenge me?
 - How have my motives for praying, fasting, giving service changed throughout my life?
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For Prayer

*A clean heart create for me, God;
renew within me a steadfast spirit.
uphold me with a willing spirit.
for you do not desire sacrifice or I would give it;
a burnt offering you would not accept.
My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit;
a contrite, humbled heart, O God, you will not scorn.*

PSALM 51:12, 14, 18-19

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