

## Our Living and Personal Relationship with God

By Rt Rev John Tan Teng Wai



Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 sounds rather antisocial, not the sort of guideline you need for the Graduates' Christian Fellowship (GCF). How can we serve others in our society when we are encouraged to "go into your room, close the door" (Matthew 6:6)? To understand what our Lord Jesus Christ is teaching here and to avoid misunderstanding, we have to understand firstly, what Jesus is talking about - in other

words, what He is not saying and what He is actually saying - and then secondly, how this can be applied to the GCF.

First, what is Jesus talking about? Our works of justice, charitable giving, prayer life and fasting. These are simply examples of Christian living. To begin with, let us find out what He is NOT saying. He is not saying that we should do everything Christian in private.

For example:

**Justice** - When you go to the office, just hide behind or in front of your computer. Do not let anyone know what are the good and interesting things you are doing for the GCF.

**Charitable giving**- Don't you ever let anyone know you have given food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked and taken a stranger into your home, visited the sick and the imprisoned.

**Prayer**- Keep it private, just between you and God. Stay away from other prayer meetings and fellowship. Do not turn up for the Sunday Holy Communion Service. Better still, search for a retired Bishop to conduct a Holy Communion Service for you in the privacy of your home.

**Fasting**- Don't you dare let anyone know that you are fasting during the season of Lent or on Good Friday.

So what then is Jesus saying? He is saying whatever you do, do it primarily to further a living and personal relationship with God. You may be doing it before men and women - in your office, in your school or in the marketplace. Before men and women, but for God. Not so as to be seen, not to take the credit or bow to the applause. Simply to please our Creator, God.

It is what Paul told the Christians of Corinth: "*whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God*" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Paul goes on to say, "*Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God - even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.*" The objective is "*so that they may be saved.*" (1 Corinthians 10:32-33). Briefly, whatever we do, first, try to be of service to others. Second, do not serve for our own purposes and

do not seek our own benefit and third, do it for God and to come closer to the Lord who is literally our Life.

### What does all this say to the GCF?

It is true programmes and activities are important. Your Council and Executive Committee have carefully considered and planned all these interesting programmes and activities. I am sure, these programmes and activities have also been commissioned by and committed to the Lord.

What today's gospel stresses is something even more important and significant - your personal relationship with God, especially those who are holding office in the GCF and working full time in the GCF office. In fact, for all GCF members, our personal relationship with God is of vital importance as we are the body of GCF. How real, genuine, strong, intimate, passionate is your relationship with God, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit? But you may ask, what has this to do with GCF? There are two vital implications.

First, to be a GCF member and to serve God through the GCF is a serious matter. We believe that through the influence of the GCF, many people in our community will be impacted. They will be introduced to Christ, leading them to be followers and disciples. This calling is serious and sacred. It calls and alerts all members to the task of evangelism. GCF is not a cosy club. It is a committed community.

Your work week is not a spiritual hiatus between Sundays, a rest in your pilgrimage to God. Here is where you work out your salvation. Here is the living-out of your weekend Holy Communion, your expedition from church to world, from altar to assignment. You move out from Christ to the world.

Second, your closeness to Christ is not only crucial for you, it is critical for the images of Christ you serve. The very name of the GCF is an advertisement for Christ. People expect, (and they are justified,) to see Christ in the membership and in the programmes. The closer you are to Christ (individually or collectively), the more effective will you help others to find Christ. The closer you are to Christ, the closer another will be, the greater his strength, the stronger her courage. Believe it! "Let your light shine before men and women, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Let Christ shine out from you without apology, without embarrassment. Let grace pour out of you and let God's love in you, move hearts to be better than they are. Christians, recognise your dignity as God's children. Be aware of your gifts; thank God for them; but above all, ask the Christ to move you ever closer to Him so that you will have His power, strength, wisdom, love and compassion to serve others.

Rt Rev Tan Teng Wai gave this message at the GCF AGM on 19 July 2003.