

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Book of Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 53:3-6)

He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, knowing pain. Like one from whom you turn your face, spurned, and we held Him in no esteem. Yet it was our pain that He bore, our sufferings He endured. We thought of Him as stricken, struck down by God and afflicted. But He was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by His wounds we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, all following our own way; but the LORD laid upon Him the guilt of us all. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection - In the Passion of Christ we can find Light and Strength

The Suffering Servant of God, Jesus Christ teaches us how to love and serve God. By His life on earth, Jesus teaches us that loving God is not merely fulfilling the prescribed laws but to render God the love He truly deserves, we need to have our hearts consumed by pure, unselfish love for God. God is love. He created us out of love according to His good will. Our mission on earth is simply to return in unadulterated and pure form God's love that He lavished upon us. It takes a lifetime of learning to perfect this. To facilitate our journey to true freedom, God bestows upon us His commandments of love. God is not as interested in our earthly achievements as in the amount of love our heart holds for Him. *With all vigilance guard your heart, for in it are the sources of life (Proverb 4:23).* Do we compartmentalize our heart by allowing an attachment to a sin which we cannot give up, or to a thing or person or self which we love above our devotion to God? The little gods which we have in our life can be easily identified by the inordinate amount of time and resources devoted to them.

By His Wounds we were healed (cf. Isaiah 53:5). God could have chosen an easier way to redeem the world but His love and wisdom determine a course of action which is perfect. Before His Incarnation, Christ would not be in a position to feel as a human being feels or suffers because He was not in the flesh. However, once Jesus assumes human flesh which in itself is a huge stepping down from His glory, He is able to suffer the similar affliction in order to heal it in the sinner. Thus, Jesus endured cruel scourging in order to heal all bodily impurity. Jesus endured humiliation and crowning with thorns in order to heal the sin of pride. Jesus was rejected, scorned and persecuted so that the wounds of rejection can be healed. Thus, St Lawrence Justinian tells us that God allowed His Christ to undergo the greatest degree of human suffering given to a person.

Though rich, He was made poor so that we can become rich (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:9). Though Son of the Most High, Jesus was born in a lowly stable with only the animals around. No palace, no attendants. He owned no property in His adult life. *Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest His head."* (Matthew 8:20). On the Cross, Jesus was in absolute poverty. Even the clothes He was wearing were stripped off Him. He had no food, no water. He had an absolute need of care, of comfort, of love. His dignity as a human person had been stripped off Him. He endured all these so that the corresponding blessings can be bestowed upon us. He took the curse due to our sins so that we can come into God's blessings (cf. Galatians 3:13). Christ redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole."

God made Him Who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we can stand in His righteousness before God (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21). In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ suffered crushing fear of the just wrath of God against the sins of all mankind. *Your wrath lies heavily on Me. You have overwhelmed Me with all Your waves (Psalm 88:8).* On the Cross, Jesus suffered the rejection by God the Father which is deserved by all sinners: *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me* (cf. Matthew 27:46). Jesus takes away our sins and gives us eternal life. *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).*

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, by Your Passion, God has shown us how much we are loved by Him. Through Your life on earth, You show us how we should love and serve God the way He deserves. Rid my heart of all attachment to things or persons that have a hold over me. To be truly free to render God the love He deserves, I must empty myself of all lesser loves so that You can be enthroned in my heart. Bestow upon me all the graces I need in order to overcome my pride, my fear, my apathy, my indifference, my weaknesses, my lukewarmness so that I may be free to love You ardently. Through my recalling in love what You endured for my sakes, let Your Passion be the source of my light and strength so that I may love ardently what You love and be always ready to conform my will to that of God's. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Keep my soul in the state of grace. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk