

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 5: 7-9)

In the days when He was in the flesh, He offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the One Who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. Son though He was, He learned obedience from what He suffered; and when He was made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – God’s plan of salvation reveals His deep personal sacrifice for our sakes

Only Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God was worthy enough to be chosen to be the Sacrificial Lamb for the salvation of mankind. Through its multitude of sins over the ages, mankind owes a huge debt to God’s justice that no amount of animal sacrifices can ever repay. The debt to God is so great that no ordinary sacrifice is suitable. No one among the human race is found suitable to be the sacrificial lamb. What we require is a high priest who is holy, innocent, undefiled, set apart from sinners, and exalted above the heavens (cf. Hebrews 7:26). Only Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Most High fits the requirement of the ‘gold coin’ that we need to repay God for all our ingratitude, indifference, apathy, self-absorption, rebellion, disobedience, impurity, selfishness, pride, stubbornness, hard-heartedness all of which translates into evil and violence in the world around us. *And as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” (John 1:36).*

To save mankind, Jesus had to become a perfect human being (cf. Hebrews 5:9), while at the same time without losing any of His divinity. Before the Incarnation, Jesus has no need to assume human flesh. He exists in spirit. However, once God decided to send a Messiah, Jesus had to assume human flesh to take on human nature in order to endure all the sufferings required of the Messiah. That is why, when Christ came into the world, He said to God, *"You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But You have given Me a Body to offer* (cf. Hebrews 10:5). St Paul tells us that though Christ was in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped but He emptied Himself of all glory when He came to earth clothed in human flesh (cf. Philippians 2:6-7). It was a huge sacrifice to step down from receiving all the adoration and homage from the heavenly court, and to assume human flesh with its accompanying weaknesses and vulnerability. To experience pain, hunger, thirst, rejection, betrayal, humiliation, and a shameful and violent death on the cross. We can appreciate and understand these sufferings from the human perspective. However, as for the separation from God, albeit temporary, and the revulsion when Christ took on the sins of the world on His own Body before He died on the Cross, we can only guess how Christ felt when He cried out: *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* (cf. Matthew 27:46).

To become the perfect man Jesus had to “learn obedience” in the flesh. Jesus has been obedient to the Father at all times in the spirit. After the Incarnation, He has to prove His obedience to the Father while He is in the flesh. He has to make up for all the disobedience of mankind. For Christ to “learn obedience” in the flesh, He has to endure the punishment of all the sins of mankind. *Son though He was, He learned obedience from what He suffered; and when He was made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:8-9).* Thus, the life of Christ on earth was one of love, suffering and sacrifice. To atone for the sin of disobedience, Christ was obedient to the Father even to death on the Cross. To atone for the sin of rejection of God and all that He stands for, Jesus experienced rejection from the time when He was born to His dying moments on the Cross. To atone for the sins of pride, Jesus was deeply humiliated by the cruel crowning with thorns and shameful death on the Cross. To atone for the sins of impurity, Jesus allowed His Body to be whipped and scourged till it became a mass of bleeding, raw, lacerated tissues. Thus, St Paul tells us: *For our sake God made Him to be sin Who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).* This is how much God loves us. God’s action shows what many words cannot express.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You went through so much to express and prove Your love for me. You won back Your Kingdom of hearts from the Prince of the World not by the power of force but by the might of Your sacrificial love. Your selfless love conquers all hearts and overcomes all evil. You are my High Priest Who can understand my every weakness because You have also been subjected to the same trials but did not sin (cf. Hebrews 4:15). By Your action, You have shown that You are not afraid to endure any suffering for my sake so that I can stand in Your righteousness before the throne of our Heavenly Father. By righteousness and by grace, I belong to You. By my free will, I consecrate myself to You so that I can bear fruits that last and glorify our Father in Heaven. Teach me to live my life in imitation of Your life on earth. As You are not afraid to prove Your love for me, let me not be afraid to prove my love for You. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk