

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Gospel According to Luke (Luke 22:39-46)

Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and His disciples followed Him. On reaching the place, He said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. When He rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, He found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. "Why are you sleeping?" He asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection ~ Christ's Agony in the Garden of Olives

His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. The sweating of blood by Jesus was recorded only in the Gospel according to St. Luke who was a physician, a well-educated man and a careful observer by profession. The sweating of blood is a rare medical condition called hematohidrosis in which a person exudes blood from his sweat glands under extreme stress. As Jesus is God, He is able to know beforehand intimately all the physical sufferings and torture that He would be subject to. St. Laurence Justinian said that Jesus endures the maximum sufferings that a human body can withstand. The Roman crucifixion was one of the cruellest punishments meted out to criminals. Even as His physical human nature struggled at the prospect, however, in the Garden of Olives, Jesus' sufferings took on a more profound spiritual level.

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," He said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." (Mark 14:34). Unlike in the desert where Jesus' weakness was on a physical level, in the Garden of Olives, the sufferings of Jesus were more of the heart and spirit. Jesus was under tremendous stress and His agonising heart needed comfort and consolation from His three closest apostles there present who can be said to represent the Church. But just when Jesus sorely needed their help in the most crucial moment, they missed out on providing it to Him. Even when Jesus had three of His closest friends nearby, He was totally deprived of human comfort.

"..My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). The real crushing weight upon Jesus was the knowledge and the certainty that He would soon bear the horrendous responsibility of taking on the guilt for all sins – past, present and future - upon Himself who is purer than a newly baptised infant. It meant meeting the wrath and justice of His Father not as Beloved Son but as Sinner of the world, coming under the just punishment of His Father. He knew that under this weight of sin, the Father would have to forsake Him and thus He would have to endure a form of hell itself, a separation from God. His soul struggled greatly and agonised over this. *I and the Father are one.* (John 10:30). Jesus could not bear to be separated from His Father.

Yet not My will, but Yours be done. As Jesus is all-powerful, He could have easily avoided all trouble and commanded down a legion of angels to protect Himself. He could have made Himself untouchable. As God, He could do a lot of things to protect Himself. But He chose to do none of these things. Rather, He willingly chose to be genuinely 'wounded for our transgressions' and 'bruised for our iniquities' so that He could truly pay for our sins and suffer human death. Jesus took our place in receiving divine punishment. With His sorrows, sufferings, death and His own Blood, Jesus paid in full to His Father so that we all could be with Him eternally in Paradise.

St. Thomas said that Christ when saw that, notwithstanding all His sufferings, there would still be so many sins committed in the world, His sorrow exceeded the sorrow of all contrite souls and surpassed every sorrow that could ever afflict a human heart. The reason is that all the sorrows that people feel are always mixed with some relief but the sorrow of Jesus was pure sorrow without any relief or consolation. At His own expense and pain, Jesus willingly drinks the bitter cup of sufferings down to the last drop for our sakes.

Conversation with our Lord

Precious Lord, in the Garden of Olives, You saw my sins and cried over them. But You also saw my redeemed soul full of sanctifying grace, beautiful and radiant as Yourself, and all the love and devotion I would have in my heart for You, and You were strengthened. May I always bear in mind that I have been bought at a great price and cost to Yourself, and never take my salvation for granted. Let the crucifix always remind me of how You went way out for me so that I could be with You in Paradise for eternity. Lord I give You my heart and also want to go way out for You! Mother Mary, teach me to love Jesus like You. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.