

## Scripture Reading

### A Reading from the Book of Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 53:2-5)

He grew up like a sapling before Him, like a shoot from the parched earth; He had no majestic bearing to catch our eye, no beauty to draw us to Him. 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. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

### Reflection – Suffering, a most precious gift we can offer God

**We are redeemed by Christ's suffering.** *By His Wounds we were healed (Isaiah 53: 5).* When God sent Jesus into our world to reclaim His Kingdom, Jesus was to redeem humanity by none other than His own suffering and the shedding of His own Blood. The ancient Jews expected something different. They probably expected a strong military ruler to come in their midst and liberate them from the Romans. Thus, many of them cannot recognize or accept the Messiah when He came as He did. Besides showing how much God loves us, the suffering of Christ throws light on the great, redemptive value of human suffering offered to God and endured with patience and love, and united to Christ's Passion.

**Suffering united to Christ's Passion can help save souls.** St Paul says: *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of His Body, which is the Church (Colossians 1:24).* In Christ, there is full redemption and salvation. The only thing "lacking" and which Christ cannot do for us is our acceptance of the salvation offered by Him and our decision to walk on the true path to the gates of the eternal Paradise. The Master Deceiver, through his temptations, has closed the hearts and minds of many people to the Truth. Many are not interested in God because they fail to understand His love and are afraid to change their lives for the better in conformity to God's moral laws. *There is but one price at which souls are bought, and that is suffering united to My suffering on the Cross (St Faustina, #342).* Suffering is never wasted when offered to God, endured with patience and love, and united to Christ's. It is a most precious gift to God to help save the precious souls of His lost children. Thus, accepted with an open heart, suffering is a great grace from God.

**How we endured and accepted our suffering will determine how closely our souls resemble Christ.** Jesus says through St Faustina: *Those who are like Me in the pain and contempt they suffer will be like Me also in glory. And those who resemble Me less in pain and contempt will also bear less resemblance to Me in glory (St Faustina, #446).* Thus, the cross which presents itself every day in our lives in one form or another are really our stepping stones into our eternal glory with Christ. Mary, the Mother of God, the Apostles, the Martyrs and all the great saints of God suffered in no small measure for God. They either suffered a bloody martyrdom or a dry one with untold suffering. All are given the gift of sharing the bitter chalice of Christ so that all can step into His eternal glory. As St Paul says: *"It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22).

**Suffering is the thermometer which measures the love of God in a soul (St Faustina, #774).** St Lawrence Justinian shared his insight that Jesus endured a level of suffering not given to any other person. *Your wrath lies heavy upon Me; all Your waves crash over Me (Psalm 88:8).* All the just wrath of God against the sins of all mankind was poured out upon Jesus, the only One without sin but was made sin for our sakes so that we can become the righteousness in Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21). All the great ones of God have endured immense suffering for love of God. Mary suffered in her heart all the wounds suffered by Jesus on His Body. Jesus' external suffering of torments and tortures was crushing, however, His interior suffering especially His fear of His Father's wrath coupled with the deep sorrow due to the ingratitude of man and the eternal loss of their precious souls despite His great Sacrifice was of such intensity it pressurized His Blood to be pushed out of the blood vessels onto the skin when He was praying in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. In His own words Jesus was totally overwhelmed by His sorrow: *My Soul is sorrowful even to death (Matthew 26:38).*

**Conversation with Jesus:** Precious Lord, my Sweetest Saviour thank You for all the sufferings and torments which You endured so patiently and lovingly on my behalf. Through the power of Your grace, help me to accept the big and small crosses I encounter daily as stepping stones into the eternal glory that I will share with You. Take away all my fears of suffering. I offer to You all the sufferings in my life united to Your Passion. Use my precious gift to You to help save souls especially those near and dear to me so that all of us can be reunited in one big holy Family and rejoice with You in eternity. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.