

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Book of Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 53:4-7)

Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – God opens Himself to Vulnerability for our Sakes

Where is your God? Detractors of our faith like to pose this question when there is some unprecedented evil or tragedy occurring in society. Far from being a distant and uncaring god, our God is lovingly involved in every level of our existence. Even the smallest detail of our life like the number of hair on our head does not go unnoticed by His love and attention (cf. Luke 12:7, Matthew 10:30). Every tear we shed is recorded by God (cf. Psalm 56:8). Far from being absent from our suffering, God Himself took up our pain and bore our suffering (cf. Isaiah 53:4). He is suffering and in anguish in the victims of violence, war, poverty, humiliation and rejection. He is in the voiceless, marginalised and forgotten ones of society.

God made us with free will and takes the risk of rejection, rebellion and disobedience. Freewill is a very precious gift of God to humankind. Freewill renders us like God in the sense that we have an intellect, reasoning, emotions and freedom to choose for ourselves. Each is given a conscience, an innate ability of knowing what is right or wrong. Additionally, to those who sincerely seek the Truth, God makes known to them His precepts, laws and commandments, all of which has the loving objective of bringing us to Himself at the end of our earthly life. However, many fall into sin and into eternal punishment. God's children suffer, and God Himself suffers more as His love is more intense. Yet, *God saw all that He had made, and it was very good (Genesis 1:31)*. God shows true love is unconditional and sacrificial. Even when God knows He will be hurt by rejection, rebellion and disobedience of His children, He still did not stop loving them. Thus God enables parents to freely love their children without securing from them in advance the promise to look after them in old age. Spouses can freely love each other without making a legal contract to love and be filial to each other till death.

God offers remedy through His own Son, Jesus. It was a huge personal sacrifice by God the Father to send Jesus, His only beloved Son to atone for the sins of humankind. Knowing in advance how much Jesus would suffer on earth adds to the selflessness of the decision by God the Father. How does a father who has sent his son to die an excruciating death at the hands of cruel executioners feel? Only God the Father knows. He did it to show us how much He loves us: *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends (John 15:13)*. Jesus said: *I and the Father are one (John 10:30)*. Father and Son are also one in suffering due to our sins.

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, You say to us: *“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! (Isaiah 49:15)*. You went on to prove Your love by offering Your Body as atonement for my sins. You put my sins on Your own sinless Body, and heal my wounds with Your wounds. To heal my rejection, You endured rejection by Your own people. To heal my impurity You allowed Your sinless Body to be cruelly scourged. To heal my pride You endured the mockery and humiliation of being crowned with a crown of thorns – You who are of infinite majesty and splendour in heaven! Sweetest Lord, I offer You my ungrateful heart. Please fill it with great love for God. May I never take for granted sin and what You have done for me. Help me to be secure in Your love, and may it be the guide in every situation in my life so that Your Passion and Death will bear great and abundant fruits of grace in my soul. Mary, Protectress of the Faith, pray for me. Thank You Jesus. Praise You Jesus.