

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Book of Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 53:4-6)

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. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – The Truth and Power of God’s Love

No one but only God can love us with an everlasting love (cf. Jeremiah 31:3). God made the human race in His own image: with a heart to love, a mind and intellect to reason, freewill to choose, and an everlasting soul which at Baptism is filled with sanctifying grace, a participation in God’s supernatural life. What He made is good. When our first parents sinned and fell from grace, God has in hand a perfect plan of salvation. The atoning sacrifice for the sins of all mankind is none other than the bloody Sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. When God tested Abraham on the mountain, He did not allow Isaac, the proposed sacrifice, to suffer even a single blow to his body. However, for the eternal good of all, God in His selflessness did not flinch from letting Jesus suffer all kinds of evil cruelties meted out on His sinless body.

Jesus became poor so that we can become rich in heavenly treasures (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:9). Though God created all of universe through Jesus and for Jesus (cf. Colossians 1:16), He was poor from the time of His birth till the time He died on the Cross on Calvary. He was born in a lowly stable. Throughout His life on earth, Jesus owns no property despite the fact that all universe belongs to Him. Before His public ministry, He works with His bare hands and helps St Joseph in the workshop, thus giving dignity to human labor. When He died, His bed was the cross, and He has no grave to call His own.

He was rejected so that we can be accepted by God the Father. When Jesus was due to be born, there was no room for Him in Bethlehem even though it was He who provided the rooms for the other babies to be born in. During His public ministry He was rejected by the leaders and elders of the Jewish people who could not recognize their promised Saviour when He came in the flesh. Challenged by His goodness and out of jealousy, they tried hard to destroy and kill him. At His dying moments on the cross on Calvary, all His disciples abandoned Him except John. Misled by their leaders, many of the Jews held Jesus in such contempt that they preferred Barabbas, a convicted murderer to be released rather than Jesus when they were given an opportunity by the Romans to release a prisoner of their choice. In their blinded eyes, Jesus the only begotten Son of God Who came to offer His life for their salvation is lower than a convicted murderer.

Jesus Who is sinless was made to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21). *The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).* Jesus takes away our sins and places them on His own Body on the cross. We do not really understand the true gravity of sins and how ugly our sins are in the eyes of God. The sight of Jesus bearing all the sins of the world was just too much for the Heavenly Father to bear, Who had to momentarily turn away. It was the moment when Jesus cried out on Calvary on that first Good Friday: My God, my God why have You forsaken Me? (cf. Matthew 27:46). Only in heaven when we attain perfect knowledge will we be able to understand how much our redemption costs Jesus and our Heavenly Father.

Jesus died so that we can share His eternal life (cf. Romans 4:25). Jesus willingly put down His life for us. *No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from My Father (John 10:18).* This is how God shows His love for us: that while we are still sinners, He did not reject us but instead sent His only begotten Son Jesus to suffer and die for us in order to present to God on behalf of all sinners a perfect, atoning sacrifice for all the sins committed by mankind. Jesus Himself teaches us: There is no greater love than to die for one’s friend (cf. John 15:13). Jesus sets a great example on how to love.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, may my soul always rejoice and exult in Your everlasting love. May each beat of my ungrateful heart be for You an act of love, thanksgiving, adoration and praise. It is love that made me, it is love that saves me, it is love that will transform me into a glorious copy of You in eternity. It is love of God that will defeat all evil on this earth. It is love of God that gives meaning to everything including all the suffering, sorrows, adversities and trials that I have to endure. Open all eyes to see the Truth so that all hearts can open to receive Your wondrous love, Your promise of salvation and to render You the love that is due to You. Mary, Mother of Salvation, teach me to love Jesus unselfishly, unconditionally. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.