

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Gospel according to Mark (Mark 15:37-39)

Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed His last. The veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. When the centurion who stood facing Him saw how He breathed His last he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!" The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – Christ suffered rejection that we have may God's acceptance

Jesus endured rejection to gain our acceptance by the Heavenly Father. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (cf. Romans 3:23). All are in need of redemption and acceptance by God. To be loved and accepted is a fundamental, emotional need of every person. Rejection and being unloved is one of the worst human suffering. When Christ came to earth, He has to atone for all sins including rejection, and to gain God's acceptance of us, sinners. At His birth, there was not even a single room and bed for Him. He was rejected publicly many times during His public ministry. The religious elite and the Jewish elders rejected His teachings and plotted to kill Him! How His tender Sacred Heart must have suffered when the Jews clamoured for Barabbas, a notorious convict, to be released rather than Him when Pilate gave the Jews the choice between the two. In their blinkered eyes, the God-Man had a standing lower than that of a hardened criminal! All the apostles except John deserted Him when He was crucified on the Cross. However, the ultimate rejection came from God, the Heavenly Father Who had to look away from the repulsive, unbearable sight of the spotless Son of the Most High laden with all the hideous sins of the whole world. About three o'clock just before He died, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (cf. Matthew 27:46). How much can a tender loving heart, that only knows how to love, take of rejection?

Christ died on the Cross of crucifixion from heart failure. Victims of crucifixion usually die of suffocation after their legs are broken as they cannot push themselves up to draw in their breath. But Christ died before His executioners came to break His legs. Thus, Scriptures was fulfilled, that say, "Not one of His bones will be broken" (cf. John 19:36). Unlike the two criminals at His side, Christ did not die the usual crucifixion death by cruxifraction - the breaking of the bones of the legs of the crucifixion victim. He died because of heart failure. A heart broken by sins against His love – rejection, humiliation, indifference, hatred, hard-heartedness, pride, selfishness, cruelty, infidelity, betrayal... *Insult has broken My heart, and I despair; I looked for compassion, but there was none, for comforters, but found none (Psalm 69:21).* A heart worn out from shock and the constriction by fluid around it, a result of the heavy blood loss due to the cruel torture and punishment meted on His sacred Body. *One soldier thrust his lance into His side, and immediately blood and water flowed out (John 19:34).*

The tearing of the temple veil signifies our access to God made possible by the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. In the time of Jesus, the temple in Jerusalem was the centre of worship for the ancient Jews. Animal sacrifices were offered there. The temple veil separated the Holy of Holies, the holiest place in the temple, which was honored as the dwelling place of God's presence on earth, from the rest of the temple. The veil signifies the separation of people from God as a result of sin. Only the high priest was allowed to go beyond this veil into the Holy of Holies once each year to enter into God's presence to make atonement for the sins of all the Israelites (cf. Leviticus 16:34). The height of the veil was estimated to be around 60 feet high, and its thickness about 4 inches thick. Thus, it was a massive curtain which should not be easily torn. Yet, the moment Jesus died, the tall and heavy temple veil was completely torn into two pieces from top to bottom! It could only be an act of God. The chasm of sin separating holy God and sinful man is now bridged by the Crucified Christ Who is the way, the truth and the life (cf. John 14:6).

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You allowed Your Sacred Body to be lacerated, pierced and torn in order to gain for me access to the Heavenly Father. *Therefore, brothers, since through the Blood of Jesus we have confidence of entrance into the sanctuary by the new and living way He opened for us through the veil, that is, His flesh (Hebrews 10:19-20).* To gain acceptance for me with the Heavenly Father, You opened Your Heart to receive rejection, humiliation, murderous hatred, betrayal, selfishness, arrogance... You received the very maximum bitterness and hurts Your Sacred Heart can take. *Like water My life drains away; all My bones grow soft; My heart has become like wax, It melts away within Me (Psalm 22:15).* The acceptance by our Heavenly Father and access to Him was signified by the tearing of the temple veil into two from top to bottom when You breathed Your last on the Cross. Your crucified Body opened up a new and living way to our Heavenly Father and our eternal, glorious inheritance which awaits us. This new living way is through carrying our own cross and walking in Your footsteps. Give me the grace to embrace my cross like You did, in order that I may share Your glory. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk