

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Gospel according to Matthew (*Matthew 27:27-31*)

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around Him. They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on His head. They put a staff in His right hand. Then they knelt in front of Him and mocked Him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on Him, and took the staff and struck Him on the head again and again. After they had mocked Him, they took off the robe and put His own clothes on Him. Then they led Him away to crucify Him. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection – Christ was humiliated to give us the strength to overcome our pride

Christ, the Son of God was humiliated right from the start when He came into our human world. When the God-child was about to be born, the whole earth which He created could not find a single room to shelter Him for His entry into our world. Despite their knocking on the doors of many inns in their desperate situation, the holy Family was turned away. In the end, St Joseph had no choice but to seek shelter for his pregnant wife in a lowly stable.

Christ, the final Judge that would judge every person was subjected to a false trial of injustice and illegalities. The chief priests, scribes and religious elders burning with jealousy and hatred for Jesus had Him secretly arrested, and hastily and illegally convened the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Court in the early hours of the morning to proclaim Him guilty of blasphemy, the gravest offence to the Jews. *Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death (Matthew 26:59).* Since they were subject to Roman rule, they could not arrange the execution of Jesus themselves. Thus, they had to pass Him on to Pilate, the Roman governor, substituting the blasphemy charge to one of sedition and treason, the gravest offence to the Romans since blasphemy is no crime to the Romans who had many gods. *But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by His teaching (Luke 23:5)* when Pilate announced he found no guilt in Jesus. Jesus, the only human person to whom the charge of blasphemy cannot be charged was found guilty by His own priests and chosen people simply by stating the truth that He is the Son of God!

Christ was condemned to death by His own priests. Christ was crucified by the Romans whose severest punishment for the vilest criminal was public crucifixion after scourging. Christ fulfilled the type of death prophesized by Scripture. *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself (John 12:32).* Though the Romans delivered the death sentence, it was the Jewish chief priests, scribes and elders that condemned Jesus to death. The majority of the guilt laid with the Jewish leaders. They were the ones who should recognize Christ's Visitation and lead the world in adoration and thanksgiving to Christ, Son of the Living God who condescended to become a human being for our sakes. How blinding and condemning human pride can be! What a profound lesson for us!

Christ was put lower than a notorious criminal. When Pilate asked the Jews which prisoner they would choose to be released at Passover: Jesus or Barabbas, a notorious murderer, they pressed for Barabbas! In their hearts, Jesus ranked no higher than even a notorious criminal. How Jesus must have felt! It was a degradation by those whom He chose to save by the sacrifice of His own life. Jesus truly earned the title given by Scripture: a Man of Sorrows (cf. Isaiah 53:3).

Christ died a death reserved only for the lowest of criminals under Roman rule. The scourging itself was so injurious to the human body that some died during the scourging itself. *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole." (Galatians 3:13).*

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, united to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the most preferred dwelling place of the Blessed Trinity in the whole universe, I lavish all love, all adoration, all praise and thanksgiving to You! To You I owe everything: my life on this earth and more importantly the life to come! Through Your humiliation at the hands of Pilate and the Jews, may my heart be purified of all hard-heartedness and pride. Give me true humility to see the reality of myself as nothing before You apart from the graces You have bestowed on me. Then with true humility, I will be able to serve You worthily. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk