

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Apr 22nd 2011

GOOD FRIDAY - CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S PASSION

First Reading: Isaiah 52. 13-53.12

The Book of Isaiah from chapter 40 onwards is later than what precedes it and is from another hand. In this second part there are four Songs of the suffering Servant and before us now is the last of these. Set against the times of exile in Babylon, the Servant appears as one humiliated and suffering, only to be revealed at the end in triumph. Who was the Suffering Servant in the contemporary scene? An individual? Israel? The faithful remnant? The Church has found the full expression of the Servant in Christ.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 30. 2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25

The psalmist's great distress alternates with his trust in God. Stanzas two and three suggest that he has been ostracised by his fellows. Yet his faith rises above his trials and finds beautiful expression in the last two stanzas. The response is actually an omitted line and is one of the treasures of the Christian faith, for it is Our Lord's last word on the Cross recorded only in Luke 23: 46 "Into your hands I commend my spirit".

Second Reading: Hebrews 4.14-16. 5: 7-9

The unknown writer of the Letter to the Hebrews has dealt with the superiority of Jesus to all that the Old Covenant implied and now explains his heavenly high priesthood. Tempted, but without sin, he can be approached by us in our need. Though a high priest, he learned obedience through suffering. From sharing our nature came his sympathy with us and his gift of salvation.

Gospel: John 18. 1-19.42

John's account of the glorification of Jesus in his passion and death presents the Lord as always being in control of the situation. John gives details not recorded elsewhere, notably in respect of Pontius Pilate. In particular it is observed that the third, fifth and sixth words from the Cross are found only in John, "Behold your mother," "It is finished".

Jesus Christ gives us an excellent picture of absolute surrender about a devotion to God, a willing determination, a protective or vicarious commitment and an unswerving obedience. This passage is a descriptive picture of cowardly denial- the cowardly denial of both the world and a close disciple of the Lord. The problem with the world is two folds. First the world refuses to believe Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. Second the world seeks for some secret, symbolic meaning and teaching in the Word of God. Religionists reject Jesus because they do not want to hear him; they do not want anything to do with demands he puts upon their lives. The only Lord they want is the lord of self. Everyone is now forced to choose. Jesus Christ is unquestionably the Son of God; therefore, we choose either Him or this world.

The most significant event in John's story is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. We are saved by his death; because he died, we live. However, there is a condition. We must believe and it is the necessity for belief that John stressed. He was an eyewitness of the crucifixion and he closed his account of the

crucifixion by saying “the man who saw it has given testimony and his testimony is true...so that you also may believe” (Jn 19.35). Hence every secret believer needs to study the cross of Christ. Really seeing the cross will turn any secret believer into a bold witness for Christ.

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