

Lent at Home - Week 4

Sunday, 19 March 2023

By Fr Frank O'Loughlin



As we approach Holy Week, I would suggest for prayer this week an Old Testament passage which has had great significance for the understanding of Jesus' death among the first Christians and also for us today. It is a reading that we will hear on Good Friday.

The passage is from the prophet Isaiah chapter 52, verse 13 to chapter 53, verse 12.

There are four passages in the book of Isaiah which are called the songs of the servant of the Lord: Ch.42,v.1-9, Ch. 49, v.1-6 and Ch. 50 v.4-11 and then there is the passage presented this week for prayer.

Look, my servant will prosper, will grow great, will rise to great heights.

As many people were aghast at him – he was so inhumanly disfigured that he no longer looked like a man - so many nations will be astonished and kings will stay tight-lipped before him, seeing what had never been told them, learning what they had not heard before.

Who has given credence to what we have heard? And who has seen in it a revelation of Yahweh's arm? Like a sapling he grew up before him, like a root in arid ground. He had no form or charm to attract us, no beauty to win our hearts; he was despised, the lowest of men, a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering, one from whom, as it were, we averted our gaze, despised, for whom we had no regard.

Yet ours were the sufferings he was bearing, ours the sorrows he was carrying, while we thought of him as someone being punished and struck with affliction by God; whereas he was being wounded for our rebellions, crushed because of our guilt; the punishment reconciling us fell on him, and we have been healed by his bruises.

We had all gone astray like sheep, each taking his own way, and Yahweh brought the acts of rebellion of all of us to bear on him. Ill-treated and afflicted, he never opened his mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughter-house, like a sheep dumb before its shearers he never opened his mouth.

Forcibly, after sentence, he was taken. Which of his contemporaries was concerned at his having been cut off from the land of the living, at his having been struck dead for his people's rebellion? He was given a grave with the wicked, and his tomb is with the rich, although he had done no violence, had spoken no deceit.

It was Yahweh's good pleasure to crush him with pain; if he gives his life as a sin offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his life, and through him Yahweh's good pleasure will be done.

After the ordeal he has endured, he will see the light and be content. By his knowledge, the upright one, my servant will justify many by taking their guilt on himself.

Hence I shall give him a portion with the many, and he will share the booty with the mighty, for having exposed himself to death and for being counted as one of the rebellious, whereas he was bearing the sin of many and interceding for the rebellious.

Again let us read the passage quietly and then read it again.

- What strikes you?
- This passage was one of those that enabled the first believers to say that what happened to Jesus was 'according to the Scriptures' – it is easy enough to identify what is said about the servant with what happened to Jesus.

This passage speaks of a figure which is in the line of development that would lead to Jesus: not a figure of power and violence as in the expectation of a powerful king but a figure which takes on human suffering, a figure who 'exposed himself to death'.

Lenten Penitential Service

A Penitential Service will take place on Thursday, 23 March at 7.00 pm at
Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, 10 Whitehorse Road, Deepdene.

All parishioners across our parishes are welcome to attend.

All Hallows Church

17 Brenbeal Street, Balwyn
Sunday 9.00 am

Basilica of Our Lady of Victories

548 Burke Road, Camberwell
Saturday Vigil 6.00 pm & Sunday 10.00 am

Our Holy Redeemer Church

4 Barton Street, Surrey Hills
Saturday Vigil 6.00 pm & Sunday 10.30 am

Our Lady of Good Counsel Church

10 Whitehorse Road, Deepdene
Saturday Vigil 5.30 pm, Sunday 10.30 am & 5.00 pm

Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Church

301 Elgar Road, Surrey Hills
Sunday 9.00 am

The Parishes of Camberwell, Balwyn Deepdene and Surrey Hills Wattle Park are committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all children and vulnerable adults. For matters that cause concern, please contact one of our Parish Child Safety Officers, Tricia Norman or Nanette Giovannini .

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