

Deacon's Corner: Redemption through Paschal Mystery (3)
The Suffering Servant

Jesus fulfills the “*suffering servant*” prophecy of Isaiah 52-53, in which a lamb is described as taking on the sins of the people, and not just of the Jewish people but the whole world. The Suffering Servant is a mysterious figure described in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. One cannot say enough about the importance of this inspired book. Indeed, its direct and indirect use by Our Lord Jesus Christ and its vast role in the life of the Church had led the Fathers to refer to it as the “Fifth Gospel.”

Biblical justice is a matter of right relationships. God chooses the Servant to bring about the transformation of the human race from the ways of sin to the ways of justice. He comes to make right man's relationships to God, himself, his neighbor, and the world, all of which have been disrupted by the first sin of Adam and Eve. The Suffering Servant establishes justice through instruction, a word that refers, above all, to the Ten Commandments.

Jesus' ministry, Passion, and Death fulfill the prophecies of Isaiah. His suffering was intense and gruesome, yet he did it all for our sake. Out of perfect love for us, he took upon himself the sins of the world and suffered the pain and punishment that rightly was ours.

“Yet it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured. We thought of him as stricken, struck down by God* and afflicted, But he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, all following our own way; But the LORD laid upon him the guilt of us all.”
(Is 53:4-6)

This act of redemption would take place according to God's holy will. God, in His omniscience, knew from the beginning that humanity would fall into sin.

“But it was the LORD's will to crush him with pain. By making his life as a reparation offering, he shall see his offspring, shall lengthen his days, and the LORD's will shall be accomplished through him. Because of his anguish he shall see the light; because of his knowledge he shall be content; My servant, the just one, shall justify the many, their iniquity he shall bear.”
(Is 10-11)

Affixed to the Cross with his arms stretched in a symbolic embrace of the whole human race, Chris became the icon par excellence of charity and mercy. Crucified on either side of him were two common criminals, a fact which fulfilled another prophecy of Isaiah: He “**was numbered with the transgressors**” (Is 53:12).

Christ consoling word to the repentant thief reveal that the gates of heaven were on the verge of being opened. And with the words “**It is finished**” (Jn 19:30), Christ died. He had completed his mission of redemption.

CCC 616: “It is love “to the end” that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life. Now “the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore, all have died.” No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all. The existence in Christ of the divine person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human persons, and constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, makes possible his redemptive sacrifice for all.”

The Church teaches that Catholicism is the fulfillment of Judaism; it is the new Israel, and we consistently see that theme played out in Church life and teaching, e.g., the twelve apostles fulfill the role of the twelve tribes of Israel, and the Mass is the New Covenant fulfillment of Passover, in which we not only offer anew but partake of the Lamb of God.

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