

Advent Reading for Saturday December 16, 2017 ***“Obedient through His Sufferings” (Isaiah 50:5-6)***

Today’s devotional focuses on the shameful and brutal suffering Jesus faced in the hours leading up to His death on the cross. Even though He was aware of what He was about to face, Jesus never wavered in His mission. Once again, hundreds of years earlier, Isaiah described several of the precise details of His suffering: *“I was not disobedient nor did I turn back. I gave My back to those who strike Me, and my cheeks to those who pluck out My beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord God helps Me, therefore, I am not disgraced; therefore I have set My face like flint, and I know I will not be ashamed. He who vindicates Me is near”* (50:5-8a).

Note how the prophecy speaks of *“My back...My cheeks...My beard...My face”*. Even though provoked by the excessively vile treatment He received, this prophecy foretells how Jesus would remain resilient throughout the entire process.

When we turn to the Gospels, we see precisely what Isaiah foretold: *“Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him”* (Matthew 26:67). *“And after having Jesus scourged, Pilate handed Him over to be crucified...they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head”* (Matthew 27:26, 30). The scourging process consisted of several strands of leather attached to a wooden handle. Each strand had a bit of metal or bone attached to the end. The victim was bound to a post by the wrists, high over his head, so that the flesh of the back would be taut. Those skilled in scourging could literally tear the flesh from the back, lacerating muscles, sometimes even exposing the kidneys or other internal organs. Scourging was so severe, some died as a result, but Jesus endured it, and then continued on in His journey to Golgotha and the cross.

In reflecting back on the sufferings of Christ, the writer of Hebrews provides this insight: *“Though He was a Son, He learned obedience through the things which He suffered”* (5:8). Our Lord did not suffer so as to correct any disobedience. As the beloved Son relying on His Father for strength, as today’s prophecy also indicated, Jesus’ testimony was: *“And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him”* (John 8:28). But as the incarnate Lord, He humbled

Himself to learn as a man everything that was involved in human suffering. This was necessary for Him to be the once for all perfect sacrifice for sins, but it also qualified Him to be a sympathetic High Priest for all who suffer in any way: *“He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, and to make propitiation for the sins of the people”* (Hebrews 2:17).

By way of further application, we as believers must always seek to keep the sufferings of our Lord, especially the cross, prominent in our thinking, and for this reason; it was for our sins that He suffered and died! *“He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed”* (I Peter 2:24).

Giving Thanks – How can we say thanks for the things You have done for us, things so undeserved, yet You gave to prove Your love for us? We do not have enough voices to express our gratitude, but we do say, “To You alone be the glory and praise!”