

# **Servant of All Servants**

## **I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS**

### **FIRST READING (Is 50:4-7)**

#### **God's goodness/graciousness upon his servant**

<sup>4</sup>\* The Lord GOD has given me/ a well-trained tongue./ That I might know how to answer the weary/a word that will waken them./ Morning after morning/ he wakens my ear to hear as disciples do/

#### **Servant's submissiveness (no vengeance)**

<sup>5</sup>The Lord GOD opened my ear;/ **I did not refuse,/ did not turn away./**<sup>6</sup>**I gave my back to those who beat me,/ my cheeks to those who tore out my beard;/**\* My face I did not hide/ from insults and spitting./

#### **God's goodness**

<sup>7</sup>The Lord GOD is my help./ therefore I am not disgraced./ Therefore I have set my face like flint,/ knowing that I shall not be put to shame.<sup>d</sup>

**THE FOCUS: Submission**

### **COMMENTARY**

- The text comes from the Suffering Servant Song.
- V.4 talks about God's goodness to the servant, concretized in his gift of "well-trained tongue" (empowering tongue, inspiring, energizing); another is the gift of hearing (receptivity)
- In vv.5-6, the suffering servant takes pride in not taking vengeance when oppressed, when physically violated. Instead he is submissive and voluntarily vulnerable.
- V.7 gives the explanation why the servant is not avoiding his enemies and why he is not defending himself. The reason is: "The Lord God is my help."
- In his suffering, the servant does not feel disgraced or shamed.

### **REFLECTIONS**

The enemy may find joy in oppressing, inflicting suffering upon the servant of God (one who does God's plan)

Behind the enemy's violent acts is to humiliate God's servant. He wants to destroy his self-esteem and self-confidence, so that he will stop doing God's will.

But, God's servant, believing God is his help, does not feel vulnerable to the violent scheme of the oppressor.

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### **RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24)**

**MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU  
ABANDONED ME?**

### **SECOND READING (Phil 2:6-11)**

#### **Jesus' Emptying**

<sup>6</sup>Though he was in the form of God,/ did not regard equality with God something to be grasped./<sup>7</sup>\* Rather, he emptied himself,/ taking the form of a slave,/ coming in human likeness;/<sup>8</sup>\* and found human in appearance./<sup>9</sup>\*he humbled himself,/ becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross./<sup>\*</sup>

#### **Exaltation of Jesus**

<sup>9</sup>\*Because of this, God greatly exalted him/ and bestowed on him the name/<sup>\*</sup> that is above every name./<sup>10</sup><sup>h</sup>that at the name of Jesus/ every knee should bend,/ <sup>\*</sup>of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,/ <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that/ Jesus Christ is Lord,/ to the glory of God the Father.

**THE FOCUS: The Emptying of Christ**

### **COMMENTARY**

- The text speaks of Paul's deep reflection on the mystery of Christ.
- It is divided into 2 parts: Vv.6-8— talk about Jesus' emptying himself of his own divinity, incarnating into a human being, emptying (humbling) further into death, and further into a death of a criminal. Jesus submitted himself to the lowest form of existence, lowest kind of indignity and humiliation. *Sagad ang humility niya*, (his humility is total); Vv.9-11—the second part, speak of the reward for his total and utter emptying:

Name above every name, every knee bends, every tongue confess "Jesus Christ is Lord."

- Paul captures well the meaning of Jesus' mystery. He expounds the meaning of incarnation of Jesus, his total self-giving on Calvary and his reward of resurrection.

## REFLECTIONS

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**GOSPEL READING** (Lk 22:14—23:56 or Lk 23:1-49)

### *False accusations*

<sup>1a</sup>Then the whole assembly of them arose and brought him before Pilate. <sup>2b</sup>They brought charges against him, saying, "We found this man misleading our people; he opposes the payment of taxes to Caesar and maintains that he is the Messiah, a king."

### *Pilate says he is not guilty*

<sup>3c</sup>Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He said to him in reply, "You say so." <sup>4d</sup>Pilate then addressed the chief priests and the crowds, "I find this man not guilty."

### *False accusations (continued)*

<sup>5</sup>But they were adamant and said, "He is inciting the people with his teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to here."

### *Pilate to Herod (Jesus, Galilean, not Judean)*

<sup>6\*</sup>On hearing this Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean; <sup>7e</sup>and upon learning that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod who was in Jerusalem at that time. <sup>8f</sup>Herod was very glad to see Jesus; he had been wanting to see him for a long time, for he had heard about him and had been hoping to see him perform some sign. <sup>9g</sup>He questioned him at length, but he gave him no answer.

### *Chief priests (Saducees) and scribes accuse*

<sup>10h</sup>The chief priests and scribes, meanwhile, stood by accusing him harshly.

### *Mocking*

<sup>11i</sup>[Even] Herod and his soldiers treated him contemptuously and mocked him, and after clothing him in resplendent garb, he sent him back to Pilate.

### *Herod and Pilate: Jesus not guilty*

<sup>12</sup>Herod and Pilate became friends that very day, even though they had been enemies formerly. <sup>13</sup>Pilate then summoned the chief priests, the rulers, and the people <sup>14j</sup>and said to them, "You brought this man to me and accused him of inciting the people to revolt. I have conducted my investigation in your presence and have not found this man guilty of the charges you have brought against him, <sup>15</sup>nor did Herod, for he sent him back to us. So no capital crime has been committed by him. <sup>16k</sup>Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him."

### *Release Barabbas, crucify Jesus*

<sup>17l</sup>[]\* <sup>18l</sup>But all together they shouted out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us." <sup>19</sup>(Now Barabbas had been imprisoned for a rebellion that had taken place in the city and for murder.) <sup>20</sup>Again Pilate addressed them, still wishing to release Jesus, <sup>21</sup>but they continued their shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" <sup>22</sup>Pilate addressed them a third time, "What evil has this man done? I found him guilty of no capital crime. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him."

### *Pilate gives in*

<sup>23</sup>With loud shouts, however, they persisted in calling for his crucifixion, and their voices prevailed. <sup>24</sup>The verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be granted. <sup>25</sup>So he released the man who had been imprisoned for rebellion and murder, for whom they asked, and he handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they wished.

### *Simon of Cyrene*

<sup>26</sup>As they led him away they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country; and after laying the cross on him, they made him carry it behind Jesus

### *People following*

<sup>27</sup>A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. <sup>28n</sup>Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children, <sup>29</sup>for indeed, the days are coming when people will say, 'Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.' <sup>30o</sup>At that time people will say to the mountains, 'Fall upon us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' <sup>31</sup>for if these things are done when the wood is green what will happen when it is dry?"

### *Two criminals and crucifixion*

<sup>32</sup>Now two others, both criminals, were led away with him to be executed. <sup>33p</sup>When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left.<sup>q</sup>

### *Jesus' Prayer*

<sup>34r</sup>[Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."]\*

### *Further insults, from all quarters*

They divided his garments by casting lots. <sup>35s</sup>The people stood by and watched; the rulers, meanwhile, sneered at him and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Messiah of God." <sup>36t</sup>Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine <sup>37</sup>they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself." <sup>38</sup>Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews." <sup>39\*</sup>Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us."

***The good thief, positive on Jesus***

<sup>40</sup>The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, “Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? <sup>41v</sup>And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal.” <sup>42w</sup>Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

***The promise***

<sup>43x</sup>He replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” <sup>44\*</sup>It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon <sup>45a</sup>because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the veil of the temple was torn down the middle. <sup>46b</sup>Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”; and when he had said this he breathed his last.

***The centurion, good man; people, repented***

<sup>47</sup>The centurion who witnessed what had happened glorified God and said, “This man was innocent\* beyond doubt.” <sup>48c</sup>When all the people who had gathered for this spectacle saw what had happened, they returned home beating their breasts; <sup>49d</sup>but all his acquaintances stood at a distance, including the women who had followed him from Galilee and saw these events.

**THE FOCUS: Jesus is a Unique Messiah**

**COMMENTARY/REFLECTIONS**

From our standards, there was no fair trial for Jesus.

Jesus is falsely and unjustly accused by the religious leaders of the people. They pressure Pilate to get rid of Jesus.

Herod and Pilate are hesitant to condemn Jesus. Repeatedly they say that they see no crime done by him.

Yet the chief priests, rulers and people’s voice becomes louder and Pilate gives in.

What could have been the volume (decibel) of their voice (noise) so that Pilate changes his mind?

Pilate listens to their loud voice (for convenience’s sake). He does not care about Jesus. “Who is he?”

Disinterested authorities can easily be swayed by persevering and rowdy crowd led by religious.

An innocent man can be easily condemned.

**II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING**

The First Reading talks about the suffering servant of the Lord. He is submissive to his oppressors. The Second Reading talks about Jesus’

submission to the will of his Father (to become a human being and to die on the cross).The Gospel Reading demonstrates how Jesus concretely submits himself to unfair trial, unfair people and unfair system.

**How to develop your homily**

The homily must be short, because the gospel reading is very long. Give time for people to reflect.

You may develop the theme of submission (obedience) to the will of God.The way to glory is submission to the will of God; there is no other way.

Unfortunately, this world refuses to submit to God’s way; because it offers another kind of glory (much money, prestige and power) which cannot be attained by submission, but by deceit and manipulation.

To be able to appreciate the theme, one must be fully converted to Jesus. Paul has experienced it and was willing to undergo the same. The apostles chose the path of martyrdom. The saints who came later taught perseverance in suffering.

The suffering servant in the Old Testament is a good example of what it is to suffer. Actively resisting makes the oppressor more determined to do his foolishness. Glory, salvation, freedom is the reward to any Christian who willingly suffers for the sake of the kingdom.

The faithful must be reminded that they should not be oppressive, unjust, violent, and should not cause pain to others. Let us not use ignorant, naive authorities to condemn the innocent.

All those uncharitable words and actions should be avoided by Christians at all cost. We should not identify ourselves with the priests and scribes, with Herod and Pilate and the people who welcomed Jesus with olive branches but turned around, preferring a criminal (Barabbas) to a holy man. Wrong choice!

-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

**III. OUR CONTEXT**

1. Today is Alay Kapwa.
2. Have you attended a contemporary Stations of the Cross or Passion Play. What do you want to incorporate in this kind of liturgy? (HM)