

FOREWORD

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING THE SUFFERING SERVANT

The Suffering Servant is a figure described in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. 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 this book as the “Fifth Gospel.” Whether directly or by allusion, the Book of the Prophet Isaiah stands behind much of the New Testament. Moreover, it is particularly the image of the Suffering Servant, as described by the Four Songs of the Suffering Servant of the Lord, (*Is 42:1-4; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-15; 53*) that Jesus takes and combines with the Son of Man prophecy from Daniel 7 to explain the kind of Messiah He is.

We see throughout the Gospels that Our Lord is reluctant to reveal Himself as the Messiah because of his credible fear that the crowd would want him to become their king. But their messianic expectations for a new King David or King Solomon, who would restore Israel to her proper place, full of power, glory and wealth, was not his mission. Rather, Christ came to proclaim a kingdom not of this world whose marks were not power, glory and wealth, but justice, peace and joy. The Suffering Servant stands in marked contrast to the human expectations of Jesus’ contemporaries, whether they be his disciples or his enemies. Jesus connects his mission with the Suffering Servant by conforming Himself to what is described in the Fourth Song.

Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured...

*Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole,
by his stripes we were healed...*

*he surrendered himself to death
and was counted among the wicked;*

*And he shall take away the sins of many,
and win pardon for their offenses.*

Is 53:4-5,12

Isaiah 53 sounds like an eyewitness account of Jesus' passion, but it was written hundreds of years before He was born.

At the Last Supper He established the Eucharist whereby his disciples would understand the meaning of his entire life. During the Mass when the priest takes the cup filled with wine, we hear him echo the words of Jesus.

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes! 1Cor 11:25-26

Christ did not need to say that He was the Suffering Servant because what He did and said made that clear. He was the Servant who was prophesied to come and would bear the sins of others for their redemption. Christ Crucified has spoken to us his final and complete word about the meaning of love and the mystery of God. Jesus - love incarnate - did what love does: suffers for others and pours out his entire life - sacrifices all - for the good of another, indeed for the good of every other.

But what of us? Jesus had definite notions about how we should follow his example of other-centered love. He spent his entire public ministry proclaiming this fact by word and deed. And just in case the apostles missed it - and they did - he told them again emphatically at the Last Supper - where he washed their feet and instituted the Holy Eucharist - when he said to them "I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you."

Jesus recognized that the word love - then as now - had lost its power and meaning and had been reduced to describe less profound realities than the one to which his entire life witnessed. He gave them the definition of love on the Cross

and prepared them for this definition by his teaching and life.

He told them earlier at the Mount of Beatitude, that if they love those who love them, what merit is there in that: pagans and sinners do as much! He told them that they should love their neighbor and even their enemy. Little did they understand what Jesus meant. Later, St. Paul explains this unbelievable truth in Romans 5:8 when he wrote “But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” As Jesus taught them about love for their neighbors, their enemies, the Apostles did not realize he was speaking of his love for them and for us.

So the love into which we have been baptized and which we are called to live every day to every person is none other than that same love of Christ. This is impossible for us to do. We can never love as Christ, except if we realize that it is He who will give us what we need to do what is impossible. So our loving as he loves is possible because he has chosen to give us this power - the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts through the grace of the sacraments, our prayers and sacrifices and our works of mercy, we are given the strength to do what is impossible: to love as he has loved us. This strength, deriving from the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, must necessarily include the gift and fruit of the Holy Spirit: courage. Courage is that cardinal virtue whose principal act is the will to fall in battle in defense of the Truth and that gift by which you and I have the strength, perseverance, patience and endurance to go where Jesus wishes us to go: into places of darkness (for we are the light of the world) and places of violence (for we are peacemakers and thus children of God).

With courage we can recognize this world is a spiritual battleground between the Kingdom of God that Jesus began and to which his martyrs throughout the centuries have witnessed and the counter-Kingdom of the world. With eyes

wide open to this truth and sealed with the gift that is the Holy Spirit - as was said when we were confirmed - we take up our places along the frontlines between the Kingdom of justice, peace and joy and the counter-Kingdom of injustice, violence and bitterness. Armed with love, truth and courage we go in our daily lives to confront a world still in need of the power of the Gospel - a world that we discover within the unredeemed parts of our heart, habits and opinions and those of society.

To love as the Suffering Servant means to follow the path of self-sacrifice – a way that would be impossible without the courage of the Suffering Servant.

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In 2002, Father Matthew Carr was clothed as a novice and given the religious name, Elias, as a member of the Augustinian Canons of Klosterneuburg, Austria. Father Elias served in parishes in Austria and Norway before helping to establish the Canonry of Saint Leopold in Glen Cove, NY in 2011. Today, the canons conduct the pastoral care of four parishes. In 2021, he became the President of the Schools of Saint Mary (N-12) in Manhasset, NY. He received a Doctor of Theology at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland in 2022