

IJ MATTERS



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SHRINE HAPPENINGS IN MARCH 2025

The Ides of March, is a day in the ancient Roman calendar that falls on March 15 and is associated with misfortune and doom. It became renowned as the date on which Roman dictator Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BCE (Before the Common Era) and was further immortalized in the play Julius Caesar by English dramatist William Shakespeare. This year, March 15, was on a Saturday and through the providence of God there were no ides.



The Assassination of Julius Caesar by William Holmes Sullivan, c. 1888

On March 8, 2025, we celebrated “Women’s’ Day”. This day is celebrated because Nikolaeva, a representative of the RSFSR, proposed to set the current date (March 8) in memory of the participation of Petrograd women in the demonstrations of March 8, 1917 that led to the overthrow of the monarchy, which was approved unanimously. The theme chose by the United Nations (UN) for this year was **“For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.”** The inclusive “ALL” is significant in that it emphasises that no woman or girl must be excluded.



On Wednesday, March 5, we entered the season of Lent. On Ash Wednesday, the Gospel reading was from Matthew in which Jesus reinterprets the three pious practices of his time, we are given an insight into how we must **be** through this Blessed season.

It is instructive to note that Jesus does not force any of these pious practices on his disciples or others. This is why he prefaces his instructions with the adverb “When” or “Whenever”. The use of the adverb means that Jesus exhorts, encourages and motivates, but does not coerce or force. Also, Jesus instructs his disciples and all who are listening **about the manner** in which these must be practiced. In a word, he suggests that the motivation for each of these must come from within. Almsgiving must be not be ostentatious, but done in secret. Prayer is not a chore or duty, but an opportunity to express our dependence on God and fasting (while good for the body) is an act which states that we are more than the external.



On March 19, we celebrated the feast of St. Joseph. He is one of the very few characters in the Bible who does not speak a single word. He acts. There is much that we can learn from his loving actions. (See the poem of Fr. Godfrey and my article on St. Joseph below).

On March 25, was the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord. Our Blessed Mother's openness to God's invitation and grace enable her to be that vessel through which God's plan for salvation came to fruition. (See the poem of Fr. Godfrey on the Annunciation).

We will soon enter Holy Week. As a preparation for these sacred days, I have written three articles to help us prepare as fully as we can to enter these sacred mysteries.

We wish each of you and your families a grace filled season of Lent. May the Infant Jesus bless you all and may Joseph and Mary always intercede.

Fr. Errol Fernandes SJ

March 2025

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Today is women's day we know
With posters boldly stating
That women are the key to life
But suffer underrating

Religions have suppressed their rights
With social systems maiming
And men get used to brutish power
To force a woman's taming

Is there a revolution nearing?
Will times change in our day?
The machos and the patriarchs
Keep menacing the way

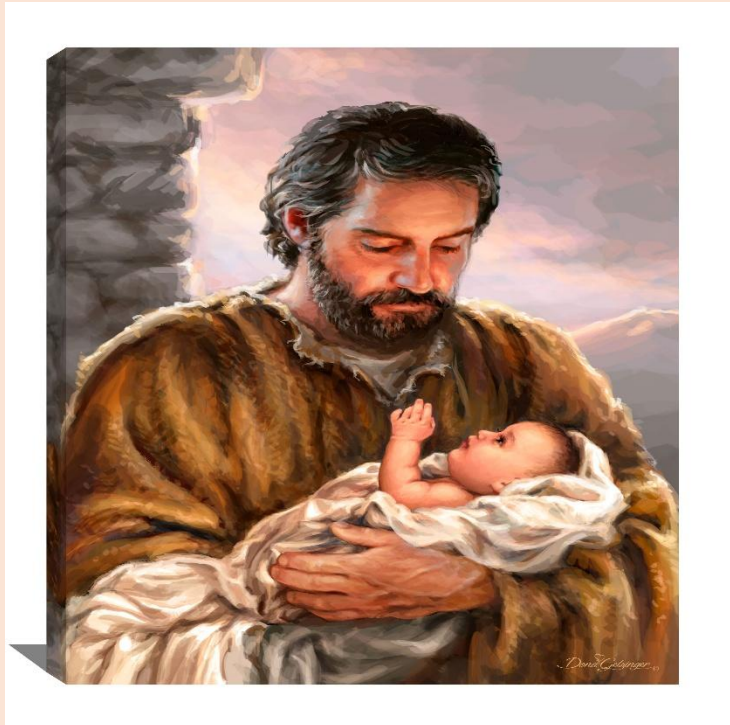
Until the Lord of history acts
Not with some abstract magic
But through the spirit women have
To rise from crosses tragic

And women can and women will
With struggles that illumine
Restore to all who are denied
The fullness of being human
Godfrey D'lima

ST. JOSEPH

We think about St. Joseph
The Carpenter who cared
For Mary and their little boy
Who dreamt and also dared

He shows us that the worker
Can preach without a word
In actions that are louder
Than sermons so absurd



The Bible narrates little
About his lifelong facts
But what it says tells everything
Of Joseph's timely acts

So, every ordinary soul
That strives to stay alive
Will find in Joseph day by day
Inspiration to survive

THE ANNUNCIATION

God keeps calling out through history
Some respond some don't care less
This Feast of the Annunciation
Celebrates the fullest Yes



We wonder just like Mary did
How could Gods mission be fulfilled
What strength what wisdom can we claim
Our doubts are rarely ever stilled

But like her yes, we give assent
With hope that we'll survive the test
Then surprisingly experience
Ability to do the best

St. Joseph - Model of faith, hope and love

I. **Introduction:** St. Joseph is one of the very few Saints who has two feast days to honour him. The scriptures do not say much about this silent saint. As a matter of fact, St. Joseph does not speak in the scriptures. His voice is not heard. This is to be expected because St. Joseph was a man of action more than words.

II. **Inspiration from St. Joseph:** As we celebrate a year dedicated to St. Joseph we can draw inspiration from him in many areas of our own lives.

1) **Attentive listening:** Matthew is the only one of the four Evangelists who places Joseph on the centre stage in his Infancy Narrative. The angel appears to Joseph in a dream on four separate occasions. (Mt 1:20-21; 2:13; 2:19-21; 2:22).

Before (Mt 1:18-19) the first of these dreams (1:20-21) Joseph had already made up his mind to follow the law because he was righteous. He became aware of the pregnancy of Mary - to whom he was engaged or betrothed - and possibly suspected her of adultery. The only logical explanation of the pregnancy was that Mary was guilty of adultery. Joseph had the choice to pursue a legal trial for adultery (Deut 22:23-27) or draw up a bill of divorce. Joseph chose the latter option because he did not want to publicly shame Mary and it would attract less attention.

Hearing with the ears of our head and seeing with the eyes of our head is only one way of hearing and seeing. True hearing and seeing require that we hear and see also with the ears and eyes of our hearts.

2) **Trusting God's word:** The angel explains that the child conceived in Mary is from the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:20) and Joseph must take his pregnant betrothed as his wife. Not only is he to do that, he will also not have the privilege as the foster father to name this child. This name has already been chosen by God as communicated by the angel (1:21). His trust in God's word shows in his action.

When things go the way we want, it is easy to believe and trust God's word. However, when God's word calls us to act contrary to what we want, it is not easy to accept and follow.

3) **Action more than words:** Joseph's trust in God's word does not end with his acceptance of Mary and Jesus as his wife and son respectively. In the three dreams that follow the first (2:13; 2:19-20 and 2:22), he is asked to perform actions which are extremely difficult. However, since it is God's plan and God's hand is at work, Joseph acts in obedience.

In the first of these dreams, Joseph is asked to go to Egypt hastily. He obeys. In the second, when the family is in Egypt, he is asked to go to Israel (2:19-20). Once again, he obeys. The choice of Nazareth and not Judea in Israel as the place of residence of the family is also attributed to Joseph's obedience (2:22-23).

We sometimes look for God only in miracles or extraordinary events. Yet, God keeps revealing God's power, might and love in the ordinary events of our lives. Like Joseph we must open our hearts wide to see.

4) **Acting without expectation:** In most of our relationships with others including members of our families, we act with some or other expectation. Sometimes, we expect those to whom we have been generous and kind to also be generous and kind to us in return. At others times, we expect a word of gratitude and even praise for reaching out. At still other times, we expect that those to whom we have reached out will not be ungrateful. With Joseph, there were no expectations whatsoever. He did what had to be done.

Each of us is also called by God in our own way to be God's instrument of love and peace. God does not expect that we do extraordinary things to reveal this love. If like Joseph we can reach out to another even in a small way, we will have done well.

5) **Model for workers and the sanctity of work:** The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Joseph was a carpenter (13:55). He does not state whether Jesus followed his foster father in this trade. In his Gospel, he refers to Jesus as "the carpenter's son" (13:55). The Gospel of Mark, however, informs us that Jesus did follow Joseph in this trade. When Jesus goes back to his hometown, the townsfolk identify him as "the carpenter" (Mk 6:3).

The celebration of the feast of St. Joseph, the worker on the first day of May each year – when Workers Day or Labour Day is celebrated in many countries of the world - is a celebration of the saint and his work ethic, but also a celebration of the participation of humans in God's work of creation. In this Joseph becomes an inspiration and model to workers of the meaning of hard work and earning one's living through the sweat of one's brow.

6) **Model of discernment and faith:** Obedience to God's word required a lot of discernment and faith from Joseph. He was aware that he would not have been able to recognise immediately whether he was indeed doing God's will. The dreams could have been the result of his own imagination. It required discernment to know that they were not. All decisions that he had to take - the hastening to Egypt, remaining in Egypt when the threat to the child was still alive, and the return to Nazareth - were life changing decisions. They would affect not only his life, but also the life of his wife Mary and Jesus. This is why he had to be convinced of that which he could not see and hope that his actions were in accord with what God wanted him to do.

One important rule of a good discernment is that we do not make decisions when we are upset or even elated. This is because these decisions will be based only on emotion and not discernment. We have to be at equanimity before we make important decisions and in this regard, Joseph is a model to be imitated.

7) **Protector of the family and of the world:** In his role as foster father of Jesus, Joseph was protector of his family. The safety of his family was of prime importance to Joseph and he placed their needs and safety above his own.

This quality of Joseph can be extended to include his protection of the whole world. As he kept the interests of his family uppermost, so he keeps the interests of the world uppermost in his intercession for the world.

When we are tempted to live self-centered and selfish lives, Joseph's selflessness comes as a breath of fresh air inviting us to be other-centered and to make a difference to the lives of others.

III. **Conclusion:** In the play Hamlet, there is a scene in which Hamlet says to his friend Horatio "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (Hamlet 1.5). One understanding of this is that while there are many things that the human person does know, there are possibly more things that we do not yet know.

One such happening is the Covid-19 pandemic. While theories abound about the origin of the virus and how best to respond to it, the fact is that we are still groping in the dark. This is why like St. Joseph we are called to listen attentively.

We live in times where many of us would prefer to see before we believe. If we are of this mind, then there is no need for faith. St. Joseph teaches us to believe even without seeing. He also teaches us to believe even when we cannot see. This is because like him, we too must realise that God's will for the world will always be better than what we want for ourselves. We must learn from St. Joseph how to make our will subservient to God's.

Our actions in most cases, even the seemingly altruistic ones are often with our eye on the reward. St Joseph teaches us that we must learn to find the reward in the doing of the action.

ENTERING HOLY WEEK WITH LUKE

Holy week begins every year with Palm and Passion Sunday. This Sunday is known by both names, because in it we celebrate Jesus' triumphal into Jerusalem and also begin that final week during which - by going to the Cross – Jesus fulfills God's plan for the world. The celebration on this celebration is a stark reminder that even as we acclaim the Lord with shouts of "Hosanna", we will condemn him with cries of "Crucify him". This is the paradox of Holy Week. The one who was sent to save the world is the very one who seemingly cannot save himself.

The Gospel for this day is from the entry into Jerusalem and the Passion Narratives of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke in Years A, B and C respectively. However, the first and second readings from Isaiah and Paul's letter to the Philippians are the same in all three years. This is instructive for a number of reasons. One is that these readings summarize the attitude of Jesus during his passion and death. This is made explicit, when he does not react to or resist his adversaries. Rather, he responds with equanimity, positivity and love. He can do this because he knows (has faith) that God is with him even when he cannot feel that presence as tangibly as he felt it during his ministry. Another reason for the choice of the readings is the *kenosis* which Jesus shows in his passion and death. Kenosis, is translated as self-emptying. Not only did Jesus empty himself by taking human form, he went further in that even as he was human, he did not choose the state of life of a king or prophet, but of a slave who had nowhere to lay his head, and who came not to be served but to serve. This service was given gratis, without charge or expectation whatsoever. This is shown when at the end of the Christological hymn from Paul (Phil 2:6-11) - which is second reading on Passion and Palm Sunday – we are told that Jesus returned to his former state of life after his death and through his resurrection. Thus, even after not clinging to his status with God, emptying himself, accepting death on a cross willingly and consciously nothing was added to him. He was not recompensed for what he did. He did what he did out of unconditional and selfless love.

As we enter Holy Week, we are invited through the liturgy to these attitudes of being responders rather than reactors, of having faith even when all evidence is provoking us not to believe and to do what we do without expectation. We must learn to see the reward of our action in the doing of the action. Our thanks is in the privilege of doing the action.

This year, the Gospel is from the Gospel of Luke. There are many distinctive aspects in Luke's Passion narrative. We will take five of these, which will help us to make our Holy Week more meaningful.

1. Healing of the High Priest's slave's right ear (Lk 22:51): All four evangelists speak about a fight that breaks out in the garden when Jesus is arrested. Only John gives us the name of the one who drew the sword (Simon Peter) and the name of the one whose ear was cut off (Malchus). Luke and John mention that the right ear was cut off. It is only in Luke that Jesus reaches out and heals the man's ear. Through this action, Jesus shows that his way of proceeding is not based on force. He will not rely on the sword. In the context of

the on-going wars in many countries even today, the message of Jesus is clear: The sword which may be seen as a metaphor for violence and war, results in destruction and retaliation. Ultimately there are no winners and losers in violent reactions, only death.

2. The trial of Jesus brings the world together as one (Lk 23:12): Luke alone of the Evangelists mentions Herod in his passion narrative. Luke states that the reason why Pilate sent Jesus to Herod was because “he learned that he (Jesus) was under Herod’s jurisdiction”, and because Herod was in Jerusalem at that time (Lk 23:6-7). While this is true on the surface level, the real point that Luke is making is that even in and through the moment of his humiliation Jesus brings about the reconciliation of enemies. Though Jesus is really incomprehensible to these rulers, he makes them become “friends.” In other words, despite the power that they wield as prefect and tetrarch they cannot free Jesus who stands before them guiltless. In such weakness they find solidarity, similarity of reaction, and friendship. It is Jesus, who is humiliated and shamed by such seemingly powerful figures, who brings about their reconciliation.

True authority reveals itself not in domination, subduing or conquering. It reveals itself in service and respecting the dignity of others. Pilate and Herod may be seen as symbols of leaders who keep thumping their chests. They are symbols of leaders who want to prove that their chest is broader than the chests of all others. They are symbols of those who foolishly imagine that they have power when in reality, it is power that has them.

3. Jesus forgives from the cross (Lk 23:34): In Luke, Jesus not only asks God (whom he addresses here as Father) to forgive all those involved in his crucifixion, he also makes a case for this forgiveness.

A Jesuit friend of mine who was very steeped in Ignatian Spirituality said to me one day, “Errol, I want to tell you a secret”. I turned to him and asked, “And what is that secret father?” He replied with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye, “God does not forgive”. For a moment I was taken aback since I knew him to be a man who was absolutely convinced that God was a loving, forgiving and merciful God. I began to quote to him the numerous texts in the Old and New Testaments which spoke of God’s forgiveness. He let me finish what I had to say. After I finished my spiel, his smile became broader and he said, “Because God does not condemn”. For a moment I was stunned. He said again, “God does not forgive, because God does not condemn”. After some reflection, I realized the truth and depth of these words and this image of God. God does not forgive, because God does not condemn.

This attitude of non-condemnation is brought out noticeably in the story of the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:1-11). It begins by stating that the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman whom they alleged ‘had been caught in adultery’. They demand that Jesus judge the case and give his verdict. Initially, Jesus tries to distance himself from the situation. When they will not let up, Jesus responds by stating the following, “*Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.*” (Jn 8:7). Immediately after saying this he once again bent down and wrote on the ground. The reason for this second writing on the ground was to give the accusers a chance to leave with their dignity intact. Jesus would challenge them but would not condemn them. It was only after their departure that Jesus straightened himself again and addressed the woman. His final words

to the woman went beyond forgiveness to non-condemnation - *“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, sir.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.” (Jn 8:10-11).* Jesus does not condemn the woman or the accusers. He condemns no one.

One needs to forgive ONLY if one thinks that one has been betrayed or let down. In many cases it is naiveté or expectation about the behaviour of others that causes this feeling. If one is open to the fact that the other may not behave or respond in the manner in which one expects, one will be prepared and consequently not feel betrayed or let down. When this happens, one does not condemn. Even in those rare cases where one thinks that one has been let down, forgiveness is not weakness but strength. By finding an excuse for the behaviour of those who accused and crucified him, Jesus showed that he did not condemn.

4. One of those crucified with Jesus is promised paradise (Lk 23:43): All four Evangelists speak of two others who were crucified with Jesus. However, Luke alone records the words that they speak. Though both make a request for salvation, there is a marked difference in the manner in which the request is made. The one who speaks first derides or blasphemes Jesus. Like so many others before him, he seeks to test Jesus’ ability and power. He does not actually believe that Jesus could save him. The other does three things. He rebukes his companion and pronounces Jesus’ innocence, he repents by accepting his sin and he shows this repentance by asking Jesus for grace.

Besides what happens on the cross in fact, many things take place behind what is happening. These are as follows:

- a) The words of the second criminal “this man has done nothing wrong” is the final pronouncement of the innocence of Jesus like Pilate and Herod had also done (Lk 23:14-15).
 - b) Luke is the only evangelist who records two raisings. The first is the raising of the son of the widow of Nain and the second of Jairus’ daughter. Though many witnessed these raisings, some did not believe. The criminal sees Jesus being put to death and believes that Jesus can give life.
 - c) Even as he hangs on the cross, Jesus focuses not on himself but on others. He manifests his mercy to the repentant criminal. Jesus reveals himself here as the dispenser of mercy and forgiveness.
 - d) The favour granted to the criminal who repented is more abundant than the request made by him. Jesus will have the criminal in his company not in the distant future, but this very day. The destiny of those who believe transcends this life.
 - e) Even as he is raised, Jesus will share his victory over death with all who ask even criminals. Here, the inaugural proclamation at Nazareth (Lk 4:18-19) finds its fulfillment in every sense of the word. Only Luke makes clear that the destiny of the one who believes in the Lord is something that transcends this life and the death with which it ends.
5. Jesus commends his spirit into that Father’s hands (Lk 23:46): Often in Luke there is mention of Jesus being handed over into the hands of humans (Lk 9:34; 18:32; 20:19), now just before he can breathe his last, Jesus hands himself into the hands of God who is his Father. Jesus’ final words in Luke before his death come from Ps. 31:5. In the original

psalm, the remarks are the prayer of a righteous sufferer who wishes to be delivered from his enemies and expresses trust that his fate is in God's hands. Jesus' remarks are an expression of righteous faith. As he faces death, he expresses his trust that God will care for him. In fact, this is a call to resurrect him.

The prayer here, contains an address and a statement of faith. The address "Father" for God, is frequent in Luke (10:21; 11:2; 22:42; 23:34) and shows the special familial appeal that Jesus makes. Jesus is giving over his spirit to God's care. Through these words, Jesus is asking God to care for and protect him during sleep. Jesus submits to his death. He "sleeps" and leaves his vindication to God.

In each of the five unique elements mentioned above and in all of them as a whole, we come across a Jesus who even when he is arrested, condemned and crucified, lives out the Gospel that he proclaimed. His mission was to heal all illnesses and he shows this by healing the High priest slave's ear, even as he is on the verge of being arrested. His condemnation brings enemies together and makes them friends, as happened in the case of Pilate and Herod. His parables on forgiveness are lived out when he forgives his condemners from the cross and gives his Father a reason why they must be forgiven. This forgiveness is given tangible expression when he does not condemn the criminal who condemned him and promises the repentant criminal paradise here and now. Finally, Jesus who had no place to lay his head commends himself into the hands of God the Father confident in the knowledge that he can rest in peace.

Fr. Errol Fernandes SJ

THREE SUPPERS ON THE DAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The image that best captures Maundy Thursday is “Supper”. This image runs through all the readings of today. The manner in which that supper is eaten, conveys its importance and relevance.

In the first reading from Exodus, the Supper is the supper of the Passover. This Passover is the passing from bondage to freedom, from shackles and chains to independence. In this supper, there are three distinctive features besides others. These are: Newness, Community and Remembering (or making present).

Newness is emphasised, when the people are instructed that the day on which the Passover is celebrated is to be considered as the **first month** of the year. This was formerly “Abib” (the month of green ears) which later became “Nisan”. It suggests a new beginning, a new way of life, a new way of being. Gone are the days of bondage and slavery. Now, the days of freedom and independence have dawned.

Though each family was to sacrifice its lamb, it was also to be interpreted as an act of the community. The separate household was to be regarded as a mini community. The focus was not on the individual family as such, but on union and community. This is why the instructions are that “if a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one”.

The unleavened bread, also called the “bread of affliction and bitter herbs are meant to remind the community of the graciousness of God who through the Passover brought them to liberty. That this was to be celebrated yearly was in order to remember (make present) the gracious deeds of God and to offer thanks for them.



In the earliest extant text on the institution of the Eucharist, - which is second reading on this day – newness, community and remembrance are also emphasized.

First, Paul is emphatic that he received this tradition from the Lord Jesus himself. Paul had never met the historical Jesus. He encountered the Christ of faith. The receipt of this tradition was therefore, through the risen Christ. This means that this tradition which Paul is explaining and handing down is genuine and true.

Second, he brings out the poignant truth that it was in full knowledge that he would be denied, betrayed and abandoned by his own disciples that he broke bread with and for them. This is indeed the epitome of unconditional love. Jesus makes no distinction when he shares the bread and cup. All – betrayers, deniers and deserters – will be given the bread and will drink from the cup. This is why this day is also known as “Maundy Thursday”. The English word Maundy comes from the Latin Mandatum which means command. At the supper Jesus gave the love command in deeds not words. The love which he manifested was unconditional and not based on one’s response.

This supper is not characterised as a “Passover meal”, rather it is the meal which Jesus had with his disciples “on the night he was betrayed”. This suggests already, that this meal was meant to be the last meal that Jesus would eat with this representative group. There was no connection in the Passover, of bread with body or cup with the new covenant. This was the invention of the Lord himself. This is the novelty or newness that Jesus brought to this meal. The sharing of the “one bread and one cup” symbolises union, unity and community.

The community represented by the disciples is given the bread and cup and commanded to make this act present. This meal which later became a Sacrament is grounded in its own validity. To participate in the meal in remembrance of Christ does not simply mean that those eating should recall and celebrate who Christ is and what he did for them, but also that they should partake in a way that befitted the occasion that it was intended to evoke. It may be said that the Lord who is being remembered and whose death is being proclaimed did not remain dead but is living and present with the community as they celebrate what he accomplished when he first came, not “to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”. Thus, besides newness and community, the act of “remembering” which here means living out what the Lord showed by example is as or even more important than the eating and drinking. The reference to “until he (The Lord Jesus) comes” reminds the community that it is meant to be a community whose koinonia or fellowship is marked by the unconditional love of the Lord for all.

In the supper which Jesus has in John, there is also newness, community and remembrance. However, there is more. Here, there is no breaking of bread or sharing the cup. The opening words that “it was before the feast of the Passover” means that this too was not a Passover meal. The washing of the feet takes the place of breaking bread and sharing the cup. Though Jesus is aware of his betrayal and also “knows” by whom he will be betrayed, it does not matter. He will wash the feet of all. In and through this act, Jesus brought together all that he was and did. With him, there was no dichotomy, there was no separation between his being and his doing. He acted on his words.

The washing of the feet by Jesus was not merely an act of humility. It was and is much more. It is a prophetic and novel gesture. This is because the washing here, **was done not before the meal** as slaves would do but **when they were in the midst of the meal**. This is what is prophetic and novel about the gesture. The removal of the robe before the washing, signifies that Jesus will soon lay down his life. The verb “took off” refers on the practical level to his robe, but on the deeper level to “laying down his life”. This action therefore, must be seen in the larger context of the passion and death of Jesus. What Jesus is doing in the washing of the feet is revealing in a summary form what he will do in his passion and death. Peter’s objection to Jesus washing his feet is an indication that Peter does not want the cross. Jesus explicates that the cross is a necessary part of his mission on earth and that any and all disciples must be prepared to accept this. Non-acceptance of the cross means that one cannot be a disciple. This is why Jesus states that this action is incomprehensible for the disciples now, but that they would understand later. There was nothing within the disciples that would have prompted anyone to wash their feet; there was nothing within the disciples that would have made anyone reach out to them. It was not that their fidelity was being rewarded. It was not that they stood firmly by Jesus’ side whenever he needed them to. Rather, it was what was in Jesus that made him look at the disciples with the eyes, the heart, the mind, of love.

The command to the disciples to follow the example of Jesus does not mean merely to wash each other’s feet. Rather, it means courage to do as Jesus has done, namely lay down his life for all.

If the Passover supper of Exodus signified a new month and a new beginning, the suppers of Jesus in Paul and John revealed newness in identifying the bread with his body and washing the feet of his disciples. If the Passover supper symbolised community in eating together, the suppers in Paul and John went further and defined community to include not so much those who are faithful, but betrayers, deniers and deserters. If the Passover supper was celebrated yearly as a remembrance, the suppers in Paul and John are an invitation to make the Lord present, by “taking off our outer garments” in imitation of the Lord.

In the gospel of Lk 9:57-62, we read about the would-be disciples of Jesus, those who had the intention, may be even the desire of following, but those who had excuses ready why they could not follow. Am I like those would-be disciples? Am I like those who are ready with an excuse why I cannot love or cannot forgive? Am I going to rise up to the challenge of Jesus who invites me to deny myself, to take up my cross and follow him?

Fr. Errol Fernandes SJ

LOVE CONQUERS DEATH

Good Friday seems a strange title to refer to the day on which Jesus died. It seems stranger that we celebrate this day and that we consider such a day Good. What really is the reason why we celebrate? And why is the day on which Jesus died called “Good”? The answer to both these questions can only be found if we focus as all the Evangelists and especially John has done on the Passion and death of our Lord from the perspective of the Resurrection. Because if Christ were not resurrected, if he were not raised from the dead, his death would have had no meaning, his death would have been the end. He would probably have been remembered as a good man, as a prophet and as a miracle worker. But it is only because he rose again, that his death took on a new meaning, a meaning that death never possessed before.

It is in the light of the resurrection therefore that we must look at the death of Christ and what it means for us today ... and yet, we must remember that the Passion and Death of Jesus were indeed historical events, that Jesus had to suffer and die. That Jesus had to go through the ignominy of the cross before his resurrection.

The Song of the Suffering Servant from the book of Isaiah, written 550 years before Jesus was never really understood till the Passion and Death of Jesus. When Isaiah uses the double expression, “that which has not been told” and “which they have never heard”, he is not repeating himself, but rather intends to bring to our attention how incredible, how incomprehensible the whole mystery is. The whole thought of the people of that time and their world would have been turned upside down. He was a man of sorrows and grief because he bore our own sorrows and grief. In the face of violence from those who despised him, he submitted willingly. Not only did people pay no attention to him, they positively despised him, rejected him and yet the man to whom they refused fellowship was truly one of them. The message that we receive through the Song of the Suffering Servant is that God protects and saves not through war like aggressiveness, but through humility. Redemption is through the mystery of suffering.



We must be confident therefore even in the midst of suffering because Jesus himself experienced trials and tribulations, suffering and ignominy, and is thus able to share with us our own. The priest of the Old Testament - as we read in the letter to the Hebrews - offers sacrifices other than himself for the forgiveness of sins, Jesus offers his very self. Jesus became the High priest through the mystery of his Passion, Death, Resurrection and Exaltation. Since he gave his life for others, his Father gave him back his own life. Jesus died believing that the Father would raise him on the third day and He did.

The Passion Narrative of John (18:1-19:42), is read every year on Good Friday. It is rich in symbolism and meaning. Of the many rich symbols and pointers that John gives, I will choose a few that bring out the meaning of the death of Jesus.

The narrative begins with a paradox, which is, that Jesus will not run away from the cross. His food and drink are to do God's will (Jn 4:34) and so he will drink the cup. This is why he gives himself up to the arresting party willingly. His way is not one of violence or showing off his physical strength, rather it is a way of confidence, trust and faith in God who for him is loving and trustworthy Father.

The trial before the religious authorities is brief. In it, Jesus is respectful but assertive. Because he knows that he speaks the truth, the ones who heard him will be his witnesses. He will not be arrogant at the trial, but will not cow down.

The trial before Pilate is divided into seven scenes. These have been identified through the movements of Pilate who goes OUT (to the crowd who are outside) and IN (to where Jesus is in the Praetorium). All seven are rich in meaning, but of them, the central or fourth scene (Jn 19:1-3) and the penultimate Jn 19:9) scenes are richer. In the central scene, the soldiers torture and mock Jesus. The torture is via the crown of thorns, which also serves as a scoff at him by means of the pseudo-insignia of a king, the purple robe serves the same purpose. The repeated coming up to him to mockingly extol him as king and slapping him in the face is to add insult to injury. The irony of this scene is that those who engage in these acts think that they are mocking him, when the truth is that this is exactly the kind of king he has come to be.

In the penultimate scene (Jn 19:9), Pilate enters the Praetorium and asks Jesus an all-important question namely: "Where are you from?" On the surface level it seems that Pilate is asking the antecedents of Jesus. However, on the deeper level, what Pilate is really asking is where Jesus gets his strength from. The crowd outside is baying for his blood. They will not be satisfied until he is nailed to the cross. There is no one who will speak on his behalf. He has been deserted. Yet, he seems so serene, so calm and collected. Where does he get his strength from? Pilate wants to know the source of his inner strength. Though Jesus does not answer initially, when he does answer, he invites Pilate to set his gaze not on things of this world, but on the things of God. This is where he gets his strength from. This strength from above enabled him to spread his arms to embrace the whole world even as the world nailed him to the cross.

And this is why we celebrate today, and this is why the day on which Jesus died is called Good.

In view of all this what is the relevance of Good Friday for me today? What does Good Friday mean for me now, here, in my situation? In answering these questions, we need to ask how we can be so moved at the Passion of our Lord, shed tears for the one who died and rose, and be oblivious to the Passion of our next-door neighbour. How can we beat our breasts every Good Friday at the loss of our Lord, and not be moved one bit by the anguish and suffering of our brothers and sisters around us? How can we look up at the cross of Christ and be overcome with pity and shame, but untouched by the numerous crosses that we see people carrying every day?

The relevance of Good Friday lies in being able to see Christ crucified today. We can only do this if our lives are modelled on the life of Christ, lives that are lived for others. To live for others means first of all that we have to forget ourselves, that we have to get rid of the Ego, the I. We have to think of others before we think of ourselves. We are called as disciples of the crucified Lord, to be a contrast community today. This contrast is not in the way we dress, in the food we eat or in the language we speak, but rather through our way of proceeding, in our way of behaving, in our way of being, in our way of love.

Christ who died on the Cross and rose again, is calling us today not so much to die for him, but to live for him. Am I willing to live for Christ?

Fr. Errol Fernandes SJ

सेवाधर्म म्हणून तर येशू टिकून आहे!! ...वेन्सी डिमेलो.

सामर्थ्य, शक्ती, विद्वत्ता, धर्म, अध्यात्म ह्या साऱ्यांनी परिपूर्ण आणि गुणवत्ता संपन्न जरी तुम्ही असला. परंतु तेथे प्रेम आणि सेवा अशी तुमच्या गुणवत्तेला कृतीची जोड नसेल, तर तुम्ही केवळ वाजणारी झांज आणि वाहत्या उथळ पाण्याचा नुसता खळखळणारा नाद आहात.

हे येशूने त्याच्या स्वयं जीवन, दुःखसहन परार्था प्राण देऊन हा सेवेचा कित्ता आपल्या जीवनाद्वारे जगास घालून दिला आहे. म्हणून येशू अजरामर आहे. संपूर्ण जगात सूर्यासारखा तळपत आहे. येशूच्या शिकवणूकीतून सेवाधर्म वजा करा हा त्याचा धर्म इतर धर्माप्रमाणे निष्क्रिय ठरेल...

येशूच्या आधी सोवळेओवळे पाळणारे तसेच केवळ देव आणि भक्त ह्यातील नाते जपणारे स्वताची सेवा करवून घेणारे श्रदावंतांचे अनेक धर्म होते. जगात भक्तीमार्ग होते. कुणी रानावनात देवाचा शोध घेण्यास गुहेत कडक तपसाधना करीत रहात. तर कुणी भिक्षुक कलावंत कलाकार लेणी खोदत बसत. आणि अशा तपसाधनेतून कलाकृतीतून देवाला आकारत रहात. अनुभव घेत रहात.

परंतु आजूबाजूच्या विदारक विघातक परिस्थितीबाबत आंधळे रहात. अन्यायी व्यवस्थेबद्दल चकार शब्द उच्चारत नसत. त्यांचे डोळे पैलतीरीचा देव, स्वर्गधाम शोधण्याकडे लागलेले असत. कुणी दुःखाची कारणे शोधत. कुणी जपतप अध्यात्मातला निखळ आनंद अनुभवता साधना करीत रहात.

येशूने ह्या साधनेचे रुपांतर सेवेत केले. स्वतः ओणवून आपल्या शिष्याचे पाय धुतले. आणि जगापुढे देवाच्या खऱ्या सेवेचा कित्ता घालून दिला. त्या सेवेतून कित्येक वर्तनसाक्षी आणि रक्तसाक्षी सज्जन निर्माण झाले. जे "जगी ज्यांचे कुणी नाही त्यास देव आहे." असा ध्यास घेऊन मदर तेरेसा, बाबा आमटे सारखे वर्तनसाक्षी बनले. तर कुणी प्रस्थापित अन्यायी रचना मोडून काढताना गांधी, ल्युथर, ऑस्कर रोमेरो, ग्रॅहम स्टेन्स, स्टॅन स्वामी सारखे रक्तसाक्षी बनले.

येशूचे देव शोधण्याचे साधन होते सेवाधर्म जपतप साधना नव्हे. ही जपतप साधना येशूवर नंतरच्या पुरोहित वर्गाने नि साधकांनी आपले जीवन सुशेगाद सुखरूप सोयीचे करण्यासाठी येशूच्या नावाने भक्तांवर लादली आहे. येशूचा खरा धर्म सेवेचा, कृतीचा, अन्यायी समाज रचना व्यवस्था बदलण्याचा, प्रसंगी जगाला प्राण अर्पण करणाऱ्या मानवपुत्राच्या भूमिकेचा होता.

येशूच्या काळी धर्म हा पूजापाठ, देवपूजा निष्क्रीय निरुपणे, अंधश्रद्धा ह्यात गुंतून पडला होता. तेथे पुरोहित वर्ग व राजे, धनाढ्य सत्ताधारी आपली सेवा करवून घेत होते. सेवा केली जात नव्हती. दलीत प्रस्थापित गरिबांना विस्थापित करीत होते. धर्माची भीती घालून त्यांना नाडीत छळत होते.

येशूने ही छद्मी समाज रचना ही व्यवस्था बदलण्यासाठी शिष्यांना घेऊन चळवळ उभारली. सेवा करवून घेऊही नव्हे आणि सेवा करवून घेण्याची वेळही येऊ नये म्हणून जनतेस आणि रयतेस आत्मनिर्भर

बनविण्याचे व आत्मविश्वास वाढविण्याचा स्व धर्म शिकवला. तुम्हीच तुमच्या जीवनाचे शिल्पकार आहात हा स्फुल्लिंग चेतवला.

तातडीची गरज म्हणून आजारी, जखमींची सेवा जरूर करा. परंतु त्याबरोबरच रयतेला कुठली समाज रचना नि व्यवस्था आजारी पाडते, जखमी करते त्या व्यवस्थेला प्रश्नही विचारा. अशी येशूची मानवी रचनेला नि व्यवस्थेला आव्हान देणारी शिकवण होती.

धर्म हा सेवाधर्मच असावा. देखावा किंवा मिरवण्यासाठी वा दाखवण्यासाठी धर्म नसावा. म्हणून तुमचे दान हे सेवाधर्मास वाहिलेले असावे. प्रार्थना नि उपास हे आत्मदर्शी अशा गुप्तदर्शी देवपित्यालाच कळतील त्यासाठीच असावे.

येशूच्या मते, तुम्ही कल्पिलेला देव स्वता समोर येऊन माणसाला दर्शन देत नसतो. तो पूर्व, पश्चिम, उत्तर, दक्षिण असा येईल असाही भाग नसतो. तो तुमच्या अंतर्गामी आहे.

"जंगल ढुंढा, पर्वत ढुंढा कही ना पाया तुजको.
सच्चे दिल से दिल में ढुंढा वही मिला तू
हमको" असे भक्तीगीत गाणारा होता.

फ्रान्समध्ये फ्रॅन्कफर्ड शहरात दुसऱ्या महायुद्धातील तुटलेल्या हाताचा एक येशूचा पुतळा आहे. तुटलेले हात तिथल्या गावकऱ्यांनी तेव्हा पुतळ्याचे नुतनीकरण करताना जोडले नाहीत. तर तो पुतळा तसाच हाताविना ठेवला आहे. आणि त्या पुतळ्याखाली एक वाक्य लिहिले आहे.

" I have no hands but yours."

"तुमचेच हात माझे हात होवोत."

"जेथे वेदना व्याकुळ जीव तळमळत असतात तेथेच आपल्या सेवेद्वारे देव स्पर्श घडत असतो"

"पर दुःखाने रडला प्राणी देव प्रकटला
त्यांच्या ठिकाणी."

येशूचे देवाशी नाते, येशूची शिकवण ही अशी होती.

दुःख जेव्हा दाटुनिया भार होतो अंतरी
तू मानवी लोचनानी सर्वकाही जाणशी.

म्हणूनच मदर तेरेसा वा बाबा आमटे

कुष्ठरोगींना जेव्हा जवळ घेऊन त्यांच्या

जखमा आपल्या हाताने बांधतात. तेव्हा सेवा तीर्थरूप बनते. तेव्हा त्या सेवेतील ते हात असतात विधात्याचे. करुणेच्या डोळ्यांनी आणि प्रेमळ हृदयाने जेव्हा आपण एखाद्या अडलेल्या गरजवंताकडे पहातो तेव्हा ते करुणामयी हृदय नि डोळे असतात देवाचे. अशी ही येशूची सेवाधर्माची शिकवण होती. आहे.

विधात्याशी त्यांचे जवळचे नाते आहे.

दुर्दैवाने येशूचा बाप्तिस्मा ज्या यार्देन नदीत झाला. त्या नदीच्या हर्मोन पर्वत राजीतील उगमाकडील स्फटिक, नितळ पाणी आज मात्र स्वार्थाची धार्मिक गटारे मिळून गढुळले आहे. नदीच्या सुरुवातीचा उगमाकडील प्रेषितांचा सेवाधर्म पुरोहित वर्ग आणि अंधभक्त विसरले आहेत.

सेवा सोडून छद्मी कर्मकांडातच सूख, आनंद, आस्वाद घेत आहेत. येशूच्या खऱ्या सेवा धर्माच्या शाश्वत आनंदापासून वंचीत आहेत. किती योजने आपण दूर आहोत. हे दुर्दैव आहे.

चला तर यार्देन वा गंगेत शाहीस्नान घेऊन
नव्हे तर सेवा सरितेत डुबकी मारून स्नान घेऊया. येशूचा सेवाधर्म जागवूया....

न त्वहं कामये राज्यम्
न स्वर्गम् ना पुनर्भवम्!
कामये दुःखताप्तानाम्
प्राणीना मार्तिनाशनम्!!

नको 'राज्य' नको 'स्वर्ग'
नको तो पुनर्जन्मही...
दुखिःतांची आसवे पूस.
अन् ओझी वहात रहा...
हाच माझा सेवस्यधर्म.

येशू आणि त्याचे मंदिराशी नाते!! ...वेन्सी डिमेलो.

येशू हा अगदी कमी वेळ मंदिरात होता. (सिनेगाँग) मध्ये हजर असायचा. गेलाच तर तेथे धर्माच्या नैतिकतेची शिकवण द्यायचा. तसा उल्लेख लूकचे शुभवर्तमान ४: १६-३०, मार्क १: २१-२८ आणि योहान १:५९ असा बायबलमधील घटनेतील अभ्यासावरून लक्षात येते. त्यामुळे येशू हा मंदिरात कमी वेळ. आणि समाजाच्या मैदानात जास्त वेळ असल्याचा अंदाज आपण बांधू शकतो. बायबल वर्णनातूनही तसा सेवाभावी येशूचा निष्कर्ष आपण काढू शकतो.

मंदिरात तो गेला तो पूजा वा कर्मकांडादि कृत्यांसाठी नव्हे. तर परखड सत्यवादी विद्रोही भूमिका घेऊनच. सिनेगाँगमध्ये तो उभा राहून वाचू लागला आणि जो ग्रंथपट त्याला देण्यात आला तेथे यशया संदेष्ट्याचे जे स्थळ त्याने काढले ते सुद्धा गोरगरीबांची बाजू घेणारे. (लूक ४: १६-३०.)

आणि देवाचे पवित्र मंदिर असे पुजारी संबोधितात. मात्र तसे असूनही तेथे चोर लुटारूनी त्या पावित्र्याची व्यापारी गुहा बनवली होती. म्हणून या ठिकाणी जहाल होऊन येशू हातात आसूड घेऊन अशा तस्करांना हाकलून देण्याच्या प्रसंगातही येशू सिनेगाँगमध्ये असल्याचे आढळते.

बालपणी त्याला त्याच्या आईवडिलांनी मंदिरात समर्पित केले होते. तेव्हा तो नादान अनजान बाळच होता. आणि येशू बारा वर्षांचा असताना मंदिरात धर्म पंडिताशी वादविवाद चिकित्सक प्रश्न करतानाच्या प्रसंगावेळी तो देवळात सापडला होता.

श्रीमंतापेक्षा विधवेचे दान कसे श्रेष्ठ? कारण ते दान तिने ठेवणीतले नव्हे तर आपल्या उपजिविकेतले दिले. म्हणून आपल्या शिष्याचे लक्ष वेधणारा येशू मंदिरात दिसतो आहे. ह्या पलिकडे येशू हा चार भिंतींच्या बंदिस्त मंदिरात सिनेगाँग वा देवळात गेल्याचे वर्णन आढळत नाही. तो अधिकतर गरजवंत लोकांमध्येच असल्याचा दिसतो आहे.

येशू हा समाजकारणात, धर्म नि समाज शुद्धीकरणात गुंतलेला. प्रस्थापित अन्यायी व्यवस्थेच्या राजसत्तेला प्रश्न विचारताना, गरजवंतांच्या सेवेतच अधिक वेळ घालवताना. गोरगरिबांचा अबलांचा आत्मविश्वास दृढ करणारा, स्त्रीयांचे सबलीकरण करतानाचा अधिक आढळतो. बायबलातील त्यांच्या चरित्रात समाजसेवक म्हणून येशू अधिक दिसत आहे. स्वतापेक्षा इतरांसाठीच जीवन कंठताना दिसतो आहे.

नैतिक आणि सेवाभावी आरोग्यदायी समाज बांधणे. त्यासाठीच तो वेळ देत होता. प्रस्थापित भ्रष्ट अन्यायी समाज रचना सुधारणे ह्यासाठीच त्याने चळवळ उभारली होती. आणि अशा समाज बांधणीला, बांधिलकीला नि जनसेवेला तो आपले मंदिर समजत होता. ही दगडी मंदिरे मी उध्वस्त करीन आणि ती तीन दिवसांत उभारीन असे येशू म्हणतो तो ह्या अशा समाज मंदिराविषयीच बोलत आहे.

देवाचे ते देवाला द्या नि राजांचे ते राजाला द्या म्हणून तो म्हणतो तेव्हा भव्य देवालये आणि राजमहाल राजवाडे बांधण्यासाठी दान द्यावे असे त्यांचे मुळीच म्हणणे नव्हते. तर धर्मीयांनी आणि राजांनी समाजाचे नैतिक, आध्यात्मिक नि सामाजिक संवर्धन करावे, मूल्यांचे रक्षण करावे. हा त्यामागील शुद्ध हेतु होता.

माळराने, शेती, गूर चरण कुरणे, डोंगर, सागर, किनारा ही त्यांची मुलूख मैदाने. दिवसा लोकांतात. रात्री गिरी शिखरावर एकांतात. अशी त्यांची बायबलातील व्यस्त दिनचर्या आढळते.

तर मग असा समाज मंदिरे बांधणाऱ्या येशूला देवळाच्या चारी भिंतीत बंदिस्त कुणी केले? ज्या बंदिस्त सिनेगाँग मंदिर विरोधात येशू होता. तर मग त्याला आणि त्याच्या शिष्यांना चर्चच्या चार भिंतीत बंदिस्त कुणी व का उभे केले? येशूचा समाज धर्म हा असा मूर्ती पूजक कसा झाला?

येशूचा धर्म सेवेचा. व्यवस्थेने सामाजिक मानसिक आवाज बंद केलेल्या, मुकेपण जपणाऱ्या अबलांना त्याने सामाजिक आवाज दिला. निर्णय प्रक्रियेत भाग घ्यायचा लावले. सामाजिक अन्याय ऐकण्यासाठी कान खुले केले. मानसिक अपंगत्व आलेल्यांना पायावर उभे केले. धैर्य साहस, धीर दिला. आत्मविश्वास दिला. अंधश्रद्धा दूर करून डोळस श्रद्धा दिली. रयतेला तर्कतीर्थ बनवले.

कुसाबाहेच्या बहिष्कृत लोकांना समाजात आणले. सन्मान दिला. कुष्ठरोगींना नवीन ओळख दिली. सारी प्रभूची लेकरे हे आमजतेला आध्यात्माचे नवसुभाषित शिकवले.

देह मंदिर चित्त मंदिर! दिलं एक मंदीर!! असा हा प्रेषितांचा धर्म त्या ऐवजी दगड विटांची महामंदिरे का उभारण्यात आली?

त्या ऐवजी देह चित्तावर उपचार करणारी इस्पितळे वा उपचार केंद्रे उभारण्याचे धर्म पंडितांना नि राज्यकर्त्यांना का वाटले नाही?

मंदिरे की इस्पितळे महामारीच्या प्रत्येक वेळी निसर्गाने आपणा मानवास सुचक इशारा दिला आहे. महामारीत वाचवायला पुजारी नव्हे तर परिचारिका, पारिचारक उपयोगी पडले. देवालयाचे सताड उघडे दरवाजे जेव्हा जेव्हा भीतीने धडाधड बंद होत होते तेव्हा विज्ञानाचे दरवाजे सताड उघडत होते. पुजारी जेव्हा झोपलेले असत तेव्हा शास्त्रज्ञ डॉक्टर पारिचारिका रात्रंदिन जागत होते. प्राणपणाने समाज बांधत होते. धीर देत होते. सेवा करीत होते. हेच तर खरे देवालय नाही का?

वेळोवेळी महामारीचा, विषाणूंचा हा जीवघेणा इशारा मिळूनही आजही भाविक, पुरोहित वर्ग इस्पितळाऐवजी महागडी देवालये सजविण्यात बांधण्यात नि नुतनीकरण करण्यात गुंतलेले दिसतात. त्यात धन्यता मानतात. आणि भावोत्कट लोक त्यांना प्रोत्साहन देत आहेत. त्यासाठीचा कोट्यावधीचा निधी जमवत आहेत. हे सारे पाहून वाटते प्रेषितांचा संदेष्ट्यांचा धर्म ह्यांना कळलाच नाही. किंवा पुरोहितवर्गाने कळूच दिला नाही. आणि तो धर्म समजून देण्याचा प्रयत्न जर कोणी करून देत असेल तर त्याला येशू प्रमाणे जिवे मारण्याचे मनसुबे रचले जात आहेत. हे जगातील साऱ्याच धर्मांचे दुर्दैव आहे.

धर्म सेवेचा, सद्भावनेचा हवा. पायाभूत गरजांचे निवारण करणारा हवा. मात्र

देवळांच्या इमारतीचा पाया दृढ आणि मंदिराचे कळस आकाशाला गवसणी घालणारे दिसताहेत...ज्या ह्या भक्तीचा येशूने स्वतः निषेध केला.

"मातीचे हे हात देवा
महानतेचा
तेथे मान नको.
पूत्र मी मानवाचा
दिव्यत्वाचा
तेथे साज नको.
नकोत अचल ती
मंदिरे नि वेदी.
चेतवू देत मज
चेतना
चिंतामणींची
गावे.
ज्या मातीशी
ज्या मानवतेशी
माझे जुळले नाते
त्या भूमीचा मज
स्पर्श हवा.
असे येशूचे लोकगीत होते.

प्रस्थापित अन्यायी व्यवस्था बदलणारा येशू!! ...वेन्सी डिमेलो.

थिऑलॉजीचा अभ्यास पूर्ण करताना

आम्हाला थिऑलॉजी ईशज्ञानाचे चिकित्सक, टीकात्मक, समीक्षात्मक अगदी बारकाईने विश्लेषण करणारा एक अति महत्वाचा विषय असतो. ज्यात येशूची नेमकी शिकवण कुठली? आणि त्यानंतर पुरोहितांनी त्यात समाविष्ट केलेले सोयीचे शब्द नि वाक्ये कुठली? (Exegesis) पृथक्करण (Critical explanation) हा विषय शिकविला जातो. तशी माहिती दिली जाते. त्या प्रकाशात आपण अन्यायी व्यवस्थेबाबत येशूची भूमिका, खरी शिकवण काय होती ते आपण जाणून घेऊयात....

प्रस्थापित जुलमी मानवी व्यवस्थेविरुद्ध येशूचा लढा होता. हे सर्वश्रुत आहे. ही अमानवी व्यवस्था बदलण्यासाठी येशूचा तसा प्रयत्न होता. आणि तो त्याने स्वतः आपल्या शूर शिष्याकरवी अमलात आणला देखील होता.

मात्र नंतरच्या काळात चर्च व्यवस्थेने विशेषतः त्यातील पुरोहित वर्गाने आपल्या सोयीनुसार ह्या "परार्था प्राण तो द्यावा" अशा येशूच्या समग्र क्रांतीत आमुलाग्र बदल घडवून आणला.

लढ्या ऐवजी अशी सौम्य शिकवण येशूच्या मुखी घालून धर्मग्रंथ तयार केल्याचे दिसून येते. नंतर हा ग्रंथ कर्मकांडात मढवून पूर्णतः पुजापाठासाठी तयार केल्याचेही दिसून येते.

राजनीती व धर्मनीती अशा एकत्र येऊन प्रस्थापितांनी तयार केलेल्या अशा नव बायबल शिकवणूकीत येशूचे क्रांतीचे प्रस्थापित व्यवस्था बदलवणारे दाखले, शिकवण आदि मध्येच सौम्य करून तथा डायल्युट करून मुद्दामहून क्रांतीविषयी शिकवण मध्येच थांबवल्याचे दिसून येते. ह्यासाठी या विषयीची काही मासलेवाईक उदाहरणे आपण पाहूयात.

येशूच्या वेळी प्रस्थापित व्यवस्था होती. लोकांवर जुलमी जकात कर लादून पिळवणूक चालू होती. येशू ती बदलू पहात होता. "जकातीच्या नाक्यावर बसलेल्या लेवी अधिकाऱ्यांकडे येशू जातो. त्याच्या डोळ्याला येशू आपले डोळे भिडतो. त्या सत्यमेव सात्विक डोळ्यात पाहून जकातदाराला असत्य बोलण्याचे धैर्य धाडस होत नाही. तो येशूला अनुसरतो. त्याचा शिष्य बनतो."

असे वर्णन आपण बायबलमधील संत लूकच्या पुस्तकातील पाचव्या अध्यायात वाचतो.

त्यानंतरची घटना अशी वर्णन केली आहे की येशू जकातदाराकडे जेवायला जातो. हे कसे शक्य आहे? भ्रष्टाचाराने लबाडीने कमावलेल्या पैशाच्या भव्य मेजवानीत येशू कसा काय सहभागी होऊ शकतो? पाप्यांबरोबर धनवानासोबत जेवताना त्यांचे परिवर्तन दाखवण्यासाठी का?

दुसरा प्रश्न एका जकातदारास विरक्ती

आली म्हणून का जकातगिरीची सारी भ्रष्ट व्यवस्था समुळ नाहीशी होईल? त्यासाठी सक्रीय तिब्र लढा द्यावा लागेल. तो येशूने पुढे दिलेला आहे. ते वर्णन ह्या घटनेतून नेमके पुरोहित वर्गाने गाळले वगळले आहे.

दुसरे उदाहरण चांगल्या शोमरोनीचे आहे.

(गुड सॅमॅरिटन) हा सॅमॅरिटन जखमींच्या जखमा बांधून त्यांना आपल्या स्वताच्या अंगावर वाहून सदसेवा चॅरीटी करीत शेवटी थकतो. तेव्हा येशू म्हणाला,
"मित्रा, जखमा बांधता बांधता हेही शोध की ह्यांना जखमी करते कोण? कुठली जुलमी व्यवस्था ह्यामागे कार्यरत आहे?
ह्याचा अभ्यास कर. सामाजिक विश्लेषण कर. व्यवस्था बदलून टाक". ही येशूची खरी शिकवण ह्या दाखल्यातून नेमकी नेहमीच्या सोयीनुसार हेतुपुरस्सर टाळली आहे. हे लक्षात घ्या.

येशूच्या मृत्यूनंतर शिष्यांची पांगापांग झाली. तेव्हा येशूच्या मर्दानी मातेने मारीयाने मोठी हिंमत करून त्यांना एकत्र आणले. ह्या क्रांतीकारी मातेने शिष्यात आशेचा नवस्फुल्लींग पेरला. आपल्या धारदार शब्दांनी लढ्याने आणि जनलोक सेवाकृतीने स्त्रीपुरूषातील विरत्व, स्त्रीत्व पुरुषत्व तिने जागे केले.

त्या प्रेरणेतून शिष्यगण परार्था प्राण देते झाले. असा मतितार्थ असलेला ऐवज बायबलमधील वर्णनातून आपणास ऐकू येतो. पुढे ही रक्तसाक्षी अहिंसक क्रांती पुरोहितांनी पुढे व्यवस्था बदलणाऱ्या येशूच्या क्रांती मातेलाच सौम्य, पवित्र बनवून दयाळु मायाळू मधुर अशी विशेषणे देऊन सुंदर कलाकृतीत पुजेआर्चेसाठी मंदिरात वेदीत पुतळा बनवून उभे केले. कैद करून ठेवले.

अन्यायी व्यवस्थेविरुद्ध लढणाऱ्या येशूला त्याचा जेष्ठ अनुभवी शिष्य पिटर नाउमेद करू पहातो तेव्हा येशू त्याला त्याच्या क्रांतीत अडखळन ठरणार्या त्या भिऱ्या शिष्यास दरडावून, ओरडून, दम भरून म्हणतो.
"सैताना मज पासून दूर हो."

प्रस्थापित व्यवस्था बदलणाऱ्या येशूच्या

कार्यात अडथळा ठरणार्या बुरसटलेल्या कर्मकांडात अडकलेल्या आजच्या पुरोहीतवर्गालाही येशू असेच ठणकावून

सांगत आहे. पण तो आवाज ऐकतो कोण? सोयीस्करपणे डोळे असून आंधळे. जीभ असून मुके. नि कान असून बहिरे राहणाऱ्या नि सभोवतालची अन्यायी व्यवस्था पाहूनही सोयीस्कर गप्प बसणाऱ्या पुरोहीतांनाही येशू ओरडून हेच सांगत आहे. पण ऐहिकतेत आणि ऐषआरामात धर्म शिकवणारे जणूकाही अमाऊसच्या वाटेवरील हे ऐकण्यास मंद नि आकलनात निर्बुद्ध असलेले असे हे आजचे शिष्य आहेत. 'ठेविले अनंते तैसेची रहावे.' असे मानणारा हा पुरोहितवर्ग येशूचे हे बोलणे ओरडणे ऐकतो का? ऐकूनही लढा उभारतो का?

अशाही निराशेच्या स्थितीत बायबल मधील येशूच्या शिकवणूकीचा चिकित्सक असा अभ्यास करून त्यातील कार्यकारणभाव, मतितार्थ शोधून जग बदलविणारी जग घडविणारी देव राज्य रामराज्य प्रस्थापित करणारी बुद्ध ख्रिस्त मार्क्स गांधी सारखी प्रस्थापित व्यवस्था बदलू पहाणारी आशेची चार किरणे जरूर दृष्टीस पडतात. हीच तर आहे येशूच्या अस्तित्वाची खूण. जगाच्या अभ्युदयाची एकमेव आशा. चला तर या आशेच्या यात्रेत चिकित्सक म्हणून सहभागी होऊ या.



LAITY RETREAT

AT THE SHRINE OF THE INFANT JESUS, NASHIK ROAD

THE THEME:

THE RISEN JESUS GIVES US HOPE AND BRINGS PEACE

DATES: May 2-4, 2025

Arrival: May 2, 2025 (Evening)

Departure: May 4, 2025 (After Lunch).

THIS A SILENT RETREAT.

Participants will be required to maintain silence during times of personal prayer and at all meals.

TOTAL DONATION:

Rs. 1,200 per person - (Limited Seats).

This includes Board, Lodge,
(Two persons in a self contained room) and Retreat Notes.

For more details, kindly contact:

FR. ERROL FERNANDES SJ

Contact: 9004617804

Email: errolsj@gmail.com



SERVICES DURING THE SEASON OF LENT

MARCH 5, 2025

ASH WEDNESDAY

Masses as follows: 6.30 AM; 8.00 AM and 12 Noon.
Ashes will be imposed on the foreheads of
all who so desire after every mass.

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS
ON ALL FRIDAYS**

(March 7, 14, 21, 28, April 4 and 11, 2025)
in Lent at 7.00 PM

HOLY WEEK

APRIL 13, 2025

PASSION AND PALM SUNDAY.

Masses as follows: 6.30 AM, 8.00 AM,
10.00 AM (Marathi) and 12 Noon.
Palms will be Blessed at all Masses

APRIL 17, 2025

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Celebration of the Lord's Supper at 6.00 PM
followed by
Procession to the Altar of Repose

APRIL 18, 2025

GOOD FRIDAY

Stations Of The Cross at 11.00 AM
Celebration of the Lord's Passion – 5.00 PM

APRIL 19, 2025

HOLY SATURDAY

Being with Mary – 8.00 AM

APRIL 19/20

EASTER SUNDAY

APRIL 19, 2025

Celebration of The Resurrection of The Lord 8.00 PM

APRIL 20, 2025

Masses as Follows: 6. 30 AM, 8.00 AM, 10.00 AM (Marathi) AND 12 NOON

FR. ERROL FERNANDES SJ