

THE TIME TO REFLECT:

Lent is the time to put us, the Christians, on trial, not Jesus, because he is not guilty but we are for being in alliance with greedy, selfish, cruel and unjust culture that ignores the needs of the poor and homeless. Lent is the time to reflect upon with which character in the crucifixion narrative would we identify ourselves? Would we have been among the crowd that hailed Jesus on the Palm Sunday? Is it not more likely that we might have been among the disciples who fled from danger, abandoning him? Or at moment in our life have we not played the role of Peter, denying Jesus, or even Judas, betraying him and selling our conscience for our profit? Have we not found ourselves like Pilate, misusing the economic and political power and washed our hands for the injustice we have done? Or, most likely of all, might we not have stood among the religious leaders who condemned Jesus by judging and condemning our needy neighbors as “lazy, alcoholic, drugged bums, homosexuals and homeless?”¹

THE TIME TO PARTICIPATE IN JESUS’ LOVE (Romans 8: 35-39)

When his disciples forsook him, he loved his forsakers. When one of them denied him and another betrayed him, he loved the denier and betrayer. When his enemies abused him, he loved his abusers. When they killed him, he loved his killers. He was the one condemned to die, but he gave his life away even as they took it from him. He gave forgiveness to the soldiers. (Luke 23:34) He gave assurance to the penitent thief. (Luke 23:43) Here was a whole human being who lived fully, who loved wastefully, and who had the courage to be himself under every set of circumstances. He was thus a human portrait of the meaning of God, understood as the source of life, the source of love. So it is the time for us to love the unlovable, needy, rejected, despised and and claim them back as our sisters and brothers.²

THE TIME TO PARTICIPATE IN JESUS’ SUFFERING IN THE WORLD (Is. 53: 1-5: Matt. 25: 31-46)

Christ suffered our suffering; with us he is caused to experience loneliness (for him, forsakenness); he laid down *his* life for us. Now we are invited to participate in his suffering, the suffering of the world, because there is still suffering in God’s beloved world, and God would still be involved in it. We are part of the response of God to the massive suffering of God’s world to let the church/Christians be led by the love of Christ into solidarity with those who suffer, and to accept the consequence of this solidarity.³

THE TIME TO HOPE:

Abandoned by his disciples, betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, accused of blasphemy by the priests, rejected in favor of a murderer by the crowd, mocked by the Sanhedrin and by Roman troops and by all who came to the cross, surrounded by darkness, and seemingly forsaken by his God, in this one dramatic moment Jesus is fully vindicated. God has

¹ Raymond E. Brown, *Crucified Christ in Holy Week* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1986), 10-11.

² John Shelby Spong, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 128.

³ Douglas John Hall, *God & Human Suffering* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 131, 141, 145.

answered Jesus' cry by replacing the Temple as the locus of worship and by offering in its place His own Son who will be confessed by Gentiles and Jew alike.⁴

On the one hand, the justice of God is presented as the right to have pity on the most pitiable; on the other hand assured the future of the kingdom of God that begins among the people who suffer most from acts of violence and injustice. The gospel assures the poor of God's life-giving, newly creating activity. The most important for Jesus is his quarrel with poverty, sickness, and demonism and forsakenness. The poor, the slaves and the prostitute are no longer the passive objects of oppression and humiliation; they are now their own conscious subjects, with all the dignity of God's first children. With this assurance and awareness, the poor, slaves and prostitutes can get up out of the dust and help themselves. They no longer adopt the system of values of their exploiters, according to which it is only the rich who are real persons. The inward acceptance by the poor themselves of the values of the rich is a severe obstacle to their self-liberation. It made poverty self-destructive, and produces self-hate in the poor themselves. The gospel about the kingdom of God which belongs to the poor, vanquishes their self-hatred, and gives the poor courage, so that they can live with "their heads held high" and can "walk erect." The poor becomes God's children in this world of violence and injustice. The kingdom of God becomes "the messianic kingdom of the poor. Let the poor and homeless get up, walk with us and sit in our midst as our friends and family."⁵

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⁴ Brown, *Crucified Christ*, 32.

⁵ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 99, 101.