

Holy Week Reflections by E.G. Chávez

Jesus' Passion. Jesus suffered deliberate humiliation and abuse by the crowd who had turned on him, and by his tormentors. He gave us the example of patient suffering in fulfillment of the will of his Father. It was what the Scriptures had prepared and foretold. Israel awaited her Messiah. Jesus was that Messiah. Except that the Messiah had to suffer. The Messiah had to take the road opposite to that taken by Adam. As Adam had corrupted human nature, Jesus transformed it. This transformation was manifested in the Resurrection, the first fruits of the new creation. We enter into, share in, the new Adam through faith. We are transformed, and some of us are even incorrupt [after death, e.g. Bernadette Soubirous].

Our salvation and liberation consists in being children of God like Jesus, obedient and loving. This is the way of the cross, which changes our corrupted human nature. We acquire the sentiments of Christ. We recover a filial relationship with God. We taste the fruits of Paradise, of the peace and joy of innocence, of intimacy with God. Christ put sin to death on the cross. Every bad attitude was overcome, transformed, so that a new man emerged. There was trust in God who created from nothing, who saves from death in the most inauspicious circumstances. It was the limits of how man should relate to God: to the point of silent trust, offering no word or action —the complete quiet which saves in Isaiah [30:15] — but rather leaving it all up to God. No human obstacle was put to the Father's will. After Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane, where it was seen that the human Jesus also shared in Adam's mortality, in the likeness of his flesh, shared his instincts and was tempted like us. But he was perfectly faithful and left us this example, so that we follow his footsteps.

Peter became the spokesman of Isaiah 53, who there is anonymous, as was the Servant. Peter and his group thought Jesus cursed and afflicted, and they all went astray. But then he, they, returned to the guardian of their souls [1 Pet 2:21-25]. The anonymity of Isa 53 is removed. Everything and everyone is given a face, a name, a concrete history.

Christ offered himself as priest, for us. He offered himself for us. He did not flee, evade [his destiny, fulfilling his Father's plan]. What he would endure would change the world, change us all. It was at great cost. All history came to its center point. At the time of the empire par excellence, when the Scriptures were completed (except those of the New Testament). In the fulness of time. Jesus' drama is the drama par excellence. A good man suffers, unjustly. He is totally abandoned, alone, naked. It is an offering to God like that of Yom Kippur [the Great Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16]. His blood sprinkles,

he is the cursed scapegoat. His water from the Temple washes and heals. Jesus is the Temple, the presence of and place of encounter with God. He is the place God promised to lead us to, to prepare for us. The blessing of return —to God! The Place and the One where *God returns*. Where we are reconciled. Welcomed back to Eden —although we are on the way back there, not yet there. We follow Jesus there, like the good thief.

God wrote his Law in Jesus' human heart, the Law of Christ [Gal 6:2], the Law of the New Covenant. It is a heart after God's own heart, which gives rest, a heart of filiality [filiation], that of the children of God who have His Spirit and are led by it.

God's creative and re-creative Spirit came down into Jesus at his baptism. He was thus anointed as Messiah and High Priest and Eschatological Prophet. After he had fulfilled all the Scriptures, he handed over to us his Spirit. This Spirit is the most evident and palpable manifestation of God. No one has ever seen God, not Jews, not Moslems. Jesus the only-begotten God [Greek text of John 1:18] made Him known. But He is known through and in the Spirit, who plumbs the depths of God. We live and *know* God through and in this Spirit. This is eternal life, intimacy with God. It is this Spirit which renews our mortal bodies. It is this Spirit which is in contrast to and in conflict with the flesh, which is corruption. Our challenge is to live by the Spirit and not to satisfy the old demands of the flesh. In Christ we overcome the flesh, through his example which we follow and by the power of his Spirit and of his Resurrection, of the transformation his humanity underwent and makes possible and makes us sharers in. We must be guided by the Spirit of Christ. We have learned how to discern this Spirit —not all have— and must not resist him, but rather please him in everything. The essence of the Spirit is love. *Agápe*/love requires, is, *kópos*, “hard toil” [see 1 Thess 1:3]. *Kópos* is when you pommel your body, *discipline* it, to love, to go beyond ourselves and our narrow confines and interests, our tastes, preferences and comfort, to seek the good of the other, loving our neighbor as ourself. Calvary was the supreme discomfort, which Jesus underwent willingly. Yet his yoke is easy and his burden light. Jesus already paid the price for us. The pioneer paved the way and made things easier for us. This is why we *rest* in Christ —we have entered into his rest as we strive to enter into the Great Rest still in our future [see Hebrews 4]. Only in God is my soul at rest. We are in Christ. We leave behind more childish things and become mature people capable of more and more solid food. My food is to do the will of the Father. The Spirit teaches all things, and guides us to all truth. As our mortal bodies crumble, we are renewed in the Spirit and ever-increasingly reflect the face of Christ. He does not give the Spirit by measure, but grace on top of grace. What does the Spirit say to the churches, to me?