

Christian Feelings

May 14, 2016

How can it even have occurred to Pope Benedict that God the Father was cruel to God the Son by making him pay for the sins of the world (cf. EC of last week)? "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised," says the Son himself, "and how am I straitened until it be accomplished" (Lk. XII, 50). St Theresa of Avila wanted "to suffer or die," but St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi wanted "to suffer and not to die." The following quote may present that Christian understanding of suffering which is lacking to modern Benedict:—

Who can I tell what I am suffering? Nobody on this earth, because it is not a suffering of this earth and nobody on earth would understand. The suffering is a sweet kind of pain and a painful kind of sweetness. I wish I could suffer ten times, a hundred times more. For nothing in the world would I want it to stop. Yet that does not mean I am not suffering. I suffer as though I were gripped by the throat, clamped in the jaws of a vice, being burnt in a furnace, pierced to the very heart.

Were I allowed to move, to be on my own, so that I could jump and sing to let loose what I am feeling inside, because the pain is truly felt, it would be a relief. But I am pinned like Jesus on the Cross. I can neither move, nor be on my own, and I have to bite my tongue in order not to satisfy people's curiosity with my sweet agony. To bite my tongue is putting it mildly. Only with a great effort can I control the impulse to let out the cry of supernatural pain and joy which wells up within and wants to burst out with all the force of a blazing flame or gushing water.

The face of Jesus, clouded over with pain as Pilate shows him to the crowd, attracts me like the spectacle of some disaster. He is in front of me and looks at me, standing on the steps of

the Pretorium, his head crowned with thorns, his hands tied in front of the idiot's dress given him by Herod to ridicule him, but in fact clothing him in a whiteness that befits his perfect Innocence. He says nothing, but everything in him is speaking, calling to me, asking me for something.

For what? He is asking me to love him. I know that that is it, and I give it to him until I feel I am dying with a sword piercing through my chest. But he is still asking me for something that I do not understand. And I wish I understood. Not understanding is torture for me. I wish I could give him everything he wants, even if I had to undergo an agonising death. And still I cannot give it to him.

His face, filled with pain, attracts me and fascinates me. He is beautiful enough when he is the Master or when he is Risen from the dead. But seeing him then fills me merely with joy, whereas seeing him in pain fills me with an unfathomable love, unmatched even by a mother's care for her suffering creature.

Yes, I do understand. Compassionate love is the crucifixion of the creature that follows its Master all the way to the final torment. It is a tyrannical love, blocking out all thought of anything other than his pain. We no longer belong to ourselves. We live only to console his torture, and his torture is our torment which literally kills us. And yet every tear torn out of us by the pain is dearer than a pearl of great price, and every pain of his we can enter into is more sought after than any treasure.

Father, I have tried to tell you what I am going through, but I try in vain. Amongst all the visions that God has given me it will always be the sight of his suffering that will lift my soul to the seventh heaven. To die of love while gazing on his suffering – what death could be more beautiful?

Kyrie eleison.