

## **Theological Reflection**

### **Lent**

Ash Wednesday, for some of us, comes around faster than every other calendar event, at least for adults. For those Catholics mature in the faith, it is another season of grace. The Church reminds us to ponder once again that striking passage of Isaiah 53:5, “Yet he was pierced through our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed.”

The Gospels relate how Jesus knew of his passion and death but he continued to set his face like flint as he traveled to death in Jerusalem. Even previous to the Gospels, God the Father asked the only begotten Son to become man to redeem mankind, “Accepting death, death on a cross” Phil. 2:8. The Son **chose** and again as the God-man he **chose** out of obedience to give up his life. It was all part of one continual yes to the Father. Every Lent we pray about his sacrificial dying for each of us. With lyrics of Christmas songs still swimming in our heads we turn to the pathos of Lent commemorating the death of the Lord. He was led as a sheep to the slaughter and he did not open his mouth (Is 53:7). Jesus entered this world as a lamb, pointed out by John the Baptist as the Lamb of God and went to his death as a victim lamb for you and for me. All had been foreseen by the Son and **chosen**. The Church encourages us to emulate Jesus in his **choosing** to be a victim for us. We also are to **choose**.

We see his passivity of victimhood, but this comes not from weakness. He tells us he could have had legions of angels protect him, or the soldiers, who had fallen down in the garden as he says, “I am he,” could have just remained paralyzed there on the ground. Jesus acted out of his strength. Throughout his life he went off and prayed alone to gain strength. Soon he would stand bloodied and crowned with thorns relying only upon his human nature fortified by grace. He has become sin for us and bears the iniquity of all. Although he is mute, he stands in judgment of his accusers. Sin, even though it is tearing his humanity to shreds, is being taken up and nailed to the Cross by Jesus, the Lord. We recall during our Lenten meditations that Jesus **chose** this for the salvation of the world and for every person ever to be born into that world.

Some of us on Ash Wednesday will hear the words, “Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.” We are called on a journey of conversion each day of Lent. We walk with all those catechumens who look forward to Baptism on Holy Saturday night. We also walk with Jesus accompanying him on his walking the Via Dolorosa, the way of suffering. The catechumens have **chosen** this new path, Jesus by his coming and taking on flesh **chose** his fate and we are to **choose** also. We, like him, have

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some control over our will and choices, but like him we hand ourselves over to life and its demands, its joys and sorrows.

Let this Lent be one of **choosing** well, of accepting what life brings without complaint. Jesus opened not his mouth, humble as a lamb. May we imitate him in this by our meekness before criticism or false judgment. **Choose** to put love where love is not as St. John of the Cross enjoins us. St. Ignatius of Loyola has taught that it is easier to **choose** if we do not have preferences. We are more open, then, to **choose** what gives God greater glory. It may be as simple as **choosing** a less desirable entrée at a local restaurant to do penance. Or the **choosing** could involve allowing others to make choices for you, to acquiesce to others' preferences. We recall how the Blessed Mother **chose** to be the Mother of the Messiah. She is the best example of always saying "yes" to God, of being nothing but yes!

I offer this prayer from the Lenten prayers of the Orthodox Church:

"Beyond all hope, I am wondrously set free, Mother of God.  
From all that troubles me,  
For I have obtained in my distress your invincible intercession!  
You are always swift to help those who beseech you in faith,  
Dispelling the darkness of their many sins.  
Therefore, with thanksgiving, I cry to you:  
Accept, Lady, this small offering of grateful praise,  
And be my Help in all things!"

May the Blessed Virgin Mary walk with you on your Lenten journey.  
**Choose** her as a loving intercessor.

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