

Dear Friends in the Risen Christ, how are you? I hope this Easter is a blessed one in your life and that of your family. I am also doing well and busy with the works of the Lord. Thanks for your prayers and your commitment to our ministry. This year, I would love to wish you a Happy Easter with a sermon. I hope you will read it and make profit out of it. If you need further clarification on this sermon, I will preach it in our retreat.

It's good to have a journey from the New Testament to the Old Testament to understand the meaning of the Blood that Jesus shed on the cross. "And Moses killed it (the ram), and took some of its blood and put it on the tip of Aaron's right ear and on the thumb of his right hand and on the great toe of his right foot" (Lev. 8:23). Here we notice the acts of Moses after killing the Ram with Aaron. Aaron's ear, hand and feet were smeared by the blood. Why did he do it? It's to remind Aaron about his duties as a priest. We too take part in the common priesthood of Jesus through the sacrament of Baptism. Therefore, it reminds us too about our day to day life and its responsibilities.

- A) Took some of its blood and put it on the tip of Aaron's right ear: It means that Aaron is supposed to hear and obey the Word of God and be faithful to it till the end of his life.
- B) On the thumb of his right hand: It means that Aaron is to perform sacred duties to God. He should not use his hands to do anything evil against God's love.
- C) On the great toe of his right foot: It means that Aaron is to walk in the path of the Holiness of God. He should not allow his legs to go any place that calls him or seduces him to commit sin.

The blood that Jesus shed on the Cross is to enhance our life in Holiness, Faith and Godly guidance.

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1.Jn. 1:7).

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).

In these two Bible Verses, we see the power of the precious blood of Jesus. It brings us to the light, to have fellowship with one another, It cleanses us from all our sin, it cleanses us from hatred, helps us to have forgiveness of our trespasses and to obtain the riches of His mercy.

Once an Evangelist was invited to a TV interview and interestingly the interviewer was an Atheist. The interviewer starts and says: You preach that there is power in the blood of Jesus but I believe there is no power in the blood of Jesus. He continued... the blood of Jesus is already in this world for 2000 years and the world today is worse than it was 2000 years ago. It has not made the world better but it has become worse and that's why I don't believe in the power of the blood of Jesus. The Evangelist -the hot bearer of the Word of God- said, Mister, there is also soap in this world yet many people are still dirty. Mister, let me explain to you how soap works in case you do not know, he said if I am dirty and stand next to a piece of soap, I will not be automatically clean no matter how close I get to it. I cannot get clean even if I work in the soap factory. Mister, if you want to know what soap can do to you then you have got to reach out with your hand, get that piece of soap and start to apply it on your body or on your clothes. Oh man, if you do you will know that there is power in the soap to clean you. So, it is the same with the blood of Jesus, it's not enough that you know many things about it but you must dare to reach out to the precious blood of Jesus with all your heart, mind, body and soul. There you will begin to experience the wonder-working power of the precious blood of Jesus. Let me cut the story short, at the end of the interview, the Atheist asked the Evangelist to pray for him.

This incident will make us think seriously about our own God experience. How poor we may be in our spiritual life though we claim that we know everything of God. This Easter celebration brings us closer to the effects of Jesus' Pascal Mystery. Is it because we do not pray or are not going church that we remain dry in our hearts? And why don't we have an improvement in our character and actions? It's because we don't reach out to Jesus -His Body and Blood- with our repentant heart and ask for His mercy. Jesus who is hanging upon the cross thirsts for us and for us to have good qualities -virtues- in our lives. Let's be soaked up in His Precious Blood.

In Ezekiel. 16:4-5, we read "As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in cloths. No eye pitied you to do any of these things for you out of compassion for you, but you were thrown out in the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born". Here we see the pathetic situation of the people of Israel. Because of their disobedience and unfaithfulness to the commandments of the Lord they suffered so much. Their sins were connected like with a mother and her baby who are connected with the navel cord. It shows us how deeply a sinner is connected with the Sin. Only Jesus can set us free from the slavery of sin. Here we

have hope, in 1. John. 3:8 “Everyone who commits sin is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the works of the devil”. The blood of Jesus, shed on the Cross has the power to set us free from the power of Sin.

Now, I would like to take your attention to Mt. 26:14-15 and it says: “Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What will you give me if I betray him to you?” They paid him thirty pieces of silver”. What surprises us here is that it is not the Chief priests who came to Judas regarding Jesus but Judas went to the Chief Priests about it. It’s not God putting a price on His creatures but Judas being a creature putting a price on God. Reversal of values. In the order of Creation God made man but if man begins to make a God.... We can call it “Golden Calf”. Disorder!!! Degradation of human life begins here.

Why did Judas go to the Chief Priests? For him three years of staying with Jesus made him think of Jesus as nothing. Usually, people approach you if they see something precious with you. For example, I have seen in the carpark of shopping malls; buyers leave a note on the windscreen of the car that they would like to purchase your car and please contact them. Here we see things different; Judas takes Jesus, if I say it literally, to the Market place to sell Him off. He doesn’t even bargain and accepts what they offered. He doesn’t see any Value in Jesus and it is becoming difficult for him to be with Jesus. Remember, he was in the company of Jesus all these years as a worker in the soap factory who remains dirty!

In this context, it’s good to think of Jn.12: 3-5: “Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus’s feet, and wiped them<sup>[a]</sup> with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?”. Mary of Bethany offered at the feet of Jesus the most expensive Perfume of 300 Denarii. Judas sold Jesus for 30 pieces of Silver! We cannot pass here without meditating over the differences of Value of the Denarii and Silver Coins. In Jesus’ parable we read: “After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard” (Mt.20:2). In a year we have got 365 days. If 65 days are holydays then a person works 300days in a year. Therefore, 300 Denarii is the total income of his or her labor of the whole year. Mary offers everything to Jesus and now she can live upon her faith in Jesus. Psalm 121: 2 became the prayer and hope of Mary of Bethany: “My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth”.

What is the significance of the 30 pieces of silver? We can see a reference about it in the book of Zekariah 11:12 “I then said to them, “If it seems right to you, give me my wages, but if not, keep them.” So, they weighed out as my wages thirty shekels of silver”. Thirty shekels of silver is the wage of a Shepherd given by the Sheep Merchants! If I say it very precisely, the thirty pieces of silver is the wage of a shepherd as the result of betrayal! An example may make it clear. When I was young, my parents entrusted with me the care of goats. One day a Goat Merchant - buyer- came to our home and bought a goat and he gave my father the full amount of the price of the goat. As he was about to go with the purchased goat, my father by pointing at me said to the buyer that This son of mine looked after this goat. The buyer looked at me and gave me a small amount of money to appreciate me. My father is the boss and he got the full price of the goat and me the shepherd got, if I say it literally, thirty pieces of silver!!!! That’s the wage of a shepherd.

Do we put a price on Jesus our Good Shepherd? Do we take Him to the market place as Judas did? When someone says; I am tired of my faith, I don’t believe in God, I wasted my life being a believer, it’s useless to trust in God, I don’t go to church any longer, or when we take our Bodies- lives- to unholy places, to unholy people, to witchcraft, to unholy relationships, to bad habits and addictions, when we fight for name and fame, seeking after pleasure and lust etc. here we too are guided by the same spirit of Judas. Though Judas the sheep gave the least value to his Jesus the Shepherd, God the father reserved the full value and glory of Jesus. That’s why no one could permanently defeat or destroy Jesus. Yes, dear friends, Jesus the shepherd from the cross tells us a great truth in silence that we have a Boss, The Father of Jesus. “Come, let us return to the LORD; for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us; he has struck down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him (Hosea 6:1-2). Easter invites us to an eye-opening truth that we should not be the sheep who sell the Shepherd but the sheep who listen, obey and are faithful to the Shepherd. This Easter gives you the hope that even if you had failures in your life or you were cheated, denied, betrayed, misused, rejected, abandoned and wounded by others; remember your real value and dignity are safe in the hand of your Boss. Jesus who defeated the treachery of others will help you to resurrect with Him to a new life. Yes, Jesus I believe: “But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible (Mt.19:26).

Jesus is risen for me and for my family: Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah

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