

The loneliness that is sin

A few days ago, I was reading the Scriptures and a phrase caught my eye, *“For our sake God made the sinless one into sin”*, *Cor. 5:21*. The *“sinless one”*, whom St Paul refers to here, is obviously Christ, but what can it mean that he was *“made into sin”*? If we look at this phrase through the eyes of the things we commonly call *“sin”*, such as dishonesty, lust, laziness etc., it makes very little sense, for how can Christ be made into dishonesty, lust etc?

Recently, I was talking to someone about the *“crucifixion”* of Christ and I mentioned that *“crucifixion”* was not a Jewish punishment – they executed people by stoning. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment. The person I was talking to was struck by this – that Jesus was not even killed by his own people, but handed over by them to the pagans to be executed – and by so doing they effectively expelled him from his nation, from his people! We see this thought also in the phrase that he was crucified *“outside the city walls”* (*Cf. Jn. 19:17*), outside the place where people lived. He was, as Isaiah says: *“a thing despised and rejected by men”* *Is 53:3*. The Lord was isolated, he was alone and in one of the most moving parts of the Passion story, we hear how this terrible *“alone-ness”* welled up inside him and broke out in that awful cry: *“My God, why have you forsaken me”* *Mt. 27:46*. Having been thrown out by his own nation, Christ felt that even God had deserted him. It must be this awful sense of rejection, this *“alone-ness”* that St Paul is referring to when he says that Christ was made into *“sin”*. This should give us pause to look again at those actions we usually call *“sin”*. We need to look past these actions to that which lies at their roots – namely our isolation from others. Those actions, which we normally call *“sins”*, are not sin itself, but the fruits of this *“being alone”*.

Last week, I watched a programme on the rape of Nanking, in the 1930s, when thousands of Chinese were slaughtered by the Japanese army. A Japanese man, who had taken part in that massacre, told how he were taught to despise the Chinese and look down on them as being less than human. It was this cultivated sense of separate-ness, alone-ness, he said, which bore fruit in that terrible killing. You can't have sin without a sinner – and the sinner is the one who lives in alone-ness, separate from God and others.

Then why do we hold on to our alone-ness? The French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre said, if there is a Creator then I am not free. That is our fear – we want to be free and being one with God and others is seen as a threat to that freedom. It is only when we are drawn deeply into love that we realise that a loving bond with someone does not take away our freedom, but, in fact, makes us free. As St. Augustine says, *“Love God and do what you want!”* But it is very frightening to come out of our loneliness. We do not want to trust the bringer of the Good News that we are loved and wanted; we want to trust only our own ideas and our own strength. To accept the Gospel we need trust, we need faith in God's great love for us. And we also need to get rid of, what my theology teacher, Bernard Häring used to call that *“sinful concept of sin”*, that most of us carry around.

Diary

Last Tuesday, I was at the church for the Bible study/discussion group and as I left to come home on my motorbike, the heavens opened and the rain came down as it can only do in the tropics. I had a raincoat, but I decided to take shelter in a restaurant I was passing and because the rain did not stop I also decided to have my supper there. At the end of the meal, someone, who knew me from the church, came to my table, sat down and began to chat and as he did so, he began to speak about a great problem that he had carried for some years. I was able to help him look at the

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matter in a different light and in so doing helped lift the burden he carried.
Coincidence or the finger of God?

As age moves on and teeth weaken, I found myself, a few years ago, having to wear a small dental plate, but a week ago I went to the dentist for some further work and he told me that for two days I should leave the plate out when I ate. So, that night, I took it out before eating, but where it went after that is one of the great mysteries of the world! It has disappeared. I and the housekeeper have searched high and low and we cannot find it. The only thing I can think of is that the dog has eaten it! Come to think of it, he does seem to have more teeth than usual!

On Monday, I leave for England to renew my visa and for a short visit to friends and family. I shall be back on 6th March – the day before the Balinese New Year, Nyepi. This was a miscalculation on my part, because on that day, no one is allowed to leave their house, make noise, have lights on etc etc. Not even planes are allowed to land in Bali on that day. It has to appear to the gods as though the island is uninhabited. It will be my first experience of Nyepi, because I was away last year.

BICC news

We began practising for Easter yesterday and fortunately an American pianist, by the name of Bob, has offered to help out with the practices while I am away. I say “fortunately”, because Eva, who has been leading the choir, will also be away with her family till after Easter. So, if you would like to help sing at Easter, please come along to the Thursday evening choir practices.

Sunday evening Mass

There will still be 6pm Mass in English, while I am away, but Father Hady has not told me who will be saying the Mass. I will be back for Mass on Sunday 9th March.

God bless,

Terry