

## REFLECTION ON THE READINGS OF THE PASSION

*Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42*



There is a book, set in Nigeria entitled “I, Safiya.” It tells of a girl who at the age of 13 is sold into marriage. She gives birth to 4 children, 2 of whom later die from chicken-pox. As time goes on she is repudiated 3 times and then accused of adultery.

Safiya is arrested; taken from her village; brought before a Sharia court and sentenced to death by stoning. She was all too aware of what would happen to her as she was stoned.

The story is simply but powerfully told and draws the reader into the many emotions experienced by Safiya. Her fear and sense of being abandoned; her near despair at the loss of her two children and her road to recovery from this deep, deep pain; her pain at learning her brother had betrayed her; her shame; and her great delight in the birth Adama” who was born out of the adulterous relationship.

Safiya felt incredulous that a person would speak out for her, that indeed the people of the world would plead her cause. Later she was overjoyed in being reconciled with her brother who had betrayed her. And finally knowing and experiencing that someone would again love her.....despite all!

For Safiya there was always a struggle to hold things in balance: fear and trust; joy and sadness; love and rejection; life and death. There is however an all-ervading sense of, for Safiya – Allah, for Christians, God!

We **know** this story.” “We know **this story**.”

And it is the ancient story we hear from the prophet Isaiah:

“without beauty, without majesty, no looks to attract our eyes;  
a thing despised and rejected by people;  
a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering,  
a man to make people screen their faces.  
He was despised and we took no account of him.”

And in John’s Passion narrative, which begins:

“Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kedron valley.  
There was a garden there, and he went into it with his disciples.  
Judas the traitor knew the place well, since Jesus had often met his disciples there and he brought the cohort to this place together with a detachment of guards sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees, all with lanterns and torches and weapons.  
Knowing everything that was going to happen to him, Jesus then came forward.....”

We sense a “willingness” or perhaps a “surrender” on Jesus’ part to enter into the further unfolding of the mystery of life – of his life. And it will not be without great cost.

There is a wisdom that is welling up from deep within. A wisdom born of the journey of life to this point in time. It is the wisdom that enables one to believe in life; to search for life; to embrace life. It is the wisdom that assures us that we are not alone!

Safiya' story ends happily, her trust in Allah, God has not been misplaced. There is a challenge for us in this, do we believe that our God wants only what is good for us? That God does want our happiness? Perhaps sometimes we succumb to the temptation to wonder about this!

We know our own struggles and sufferings and looking around us we see so much greed, poverty, sickness and warring! Where do we find God in these realities? How do we find God?

Like the Suffering Servant and Jesus we are called to embrace the wisdom of confidently surrendering to the unfolding of the mystery of life!

As we do this we will surely and certainly come to know the "refining" hand of God in our lives. We will find ourselves challenged – where is God in this moment of suffering? Where is the good in this? It is only through trust that we will find the answers to these questions, and finding the answers we move more deeply into the mystery of suffering and life.

To return to the beautiful reading about the Suffering Servant, how does it begin?

“See, my servant will prosper, he shall be lifted up, exalted, rise to great heights.”

And Jesus? With the Jesus story - WE KNOW! WE LIVE IT! He has conquered death and is risen! Death holds no power!

In Jesus we have one who is capable of feeling our weaknesses with us. One who has been tempted in every way that we are, but he is without sin.

Each day, in every person, in every country this story is enacted! Every day we experience the call to surrender to the unfolding of the mystery of life;

We do not do this alone for we stand in the long line of all those who have gone before us. We stand united with each other. We stand in the person of Jesus. **IN LIFE!**

May each of us grow in wisdom. May we “surrender” to the journey and mystery of life opened to us through Jesus our Saviour.

Take a few moments to quieten your heart and open to God

When you are ready reflect on your life's journey.  
What is the wisdom that is welling up  
from deep within you that is born  
of your journey to now?

How does this wisdom enable you to continue  
to believe in life, to search for life, to embrace life?

It is the wisdom that assures us that we are not alone!

With Mary MacKillop we say  
“God has done wonders for us.” *28<sup>th</sup> February 1890*