

All Saints

Isaiah 53, 1 – 3

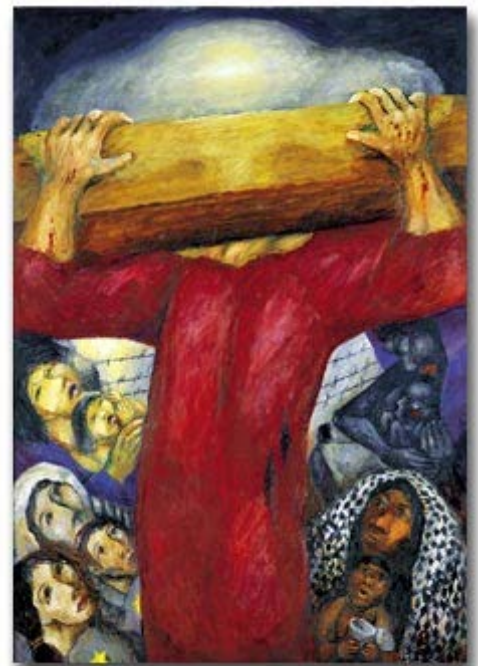
Who has believed our report?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,
And as a root out of dry ground.
He has no form or comeliness;
And when we see Him,
There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

He is despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Petronius (a centurion) remembers

It started as another normal day - training at the barracks, putting the men through their paces; usual round of guard duties. That day there was an execution - these happened frequently enough, and as duty centurion it was my job to see things done. Crucifixion is not the easiest way to go, and getting the criminals nailed up is not the most pleasant job, but you got used to it and a soldier does his duty. That day there were three for the death sentence. Two were clearly hardened criminals, but somehow the third was different. There were the usual screams when the nails went in, but while the other two were cursing and swearing, all the third one said was "Father, forgive them" - I had never come across anything like that before, and it hit me.



Seiger Koder

As the day wore on and the three got weaker, I heard the ridicule being given to the three, but especially the one. Someone said that he was Jesus of Nazareth - that rang a bell because I remembered my fellow centurion describing how one of his servants had been miraculously healed. By this Jesus. By all accounts he was a great teacher and miracle worker and claimed to be the Son of God. I was religious of course - we Romans had large numbers of gods - but none of them seemed to be in this league. And I saw how, despite the pain he was evidently in, he seemed to leak love - that is the only way I can put it. He had to be either a freak or someone very special.

Then the whole place went dark from midday to mid afternoon. Never known anything like it before and it again got me turning things over in my mind. When he died the earth shook and there were strange things happening - graves opening, and I heard that the great curtain in the Jews' temple was torn in half. But by that time I had become convinced that this was no freak - he was someone special. And despite my past and the things I had done, he loved me. Truly this was the Son of God.



Prayer

My Saviour, Son of God do you invite me to share in the glory of the resurrection? Please stay with me as I struggle to see how accepting the crosses of my life will free me from the power of the one who wants only to destroy my love and trust in you. Help me to be humble, accepting and forgiving like you. I want to turn to you with the same trust you had in the love of your Father, whatever your will may be for my life.