



St Francis of Assisi Parish



## EASTER REFLECTION

### THE PRIESTHOOD OF A CHRISTIAN

God's desire is to be loved rather than to be feared. God's desire is to be a Father than to be a Lord. Hence, He appeals to us in his mercy to avoid having to punish us in his severity. The Lord Jesus appeals from the Cross.

In my body I want you to see your body, your members, your bones and your heart. You may fear what is divine in it but why not love what is human in it. You may run away from me as Lord but why not run to me as your Father. Perhaps, you are filled with shame for causing my bitter passion on the Cross. But do not be afraid. This Cross inflicts a mortal injury, not on me but on death. These nails no longer pain me but only deepen your love for me. I do not cry out because of these wounds but through them I draw you into my heart. My body was stretched on the Cross as a symbol not of how much I suffered but of my all-embracing love for you. I count it no loss to have shed my blood. It is the price I paid for your ransom. Hence, come and return to me as your Father who repays good for evil, love for injury and boundless charity for the piercing wounds. I appeal to you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice. This is the Priesthood of a Christian.

A Christian is both the Victim offered on his own behalf and the Priest who makes the offering. He need not go beyond himself to seek what he is to immolate to God. With himself and in himself he brings the sacrifice he is to offer to God for himself. The Victim remains and the Priest remains. Immolated the Victim lives; the Priest who immolates cannot kill. Truly, it is an amazing sacrifice in which a body is offered without being slain and blood is offered without being shed. Hence the appeal to present your bodies as a living Sacrifice, in the pattern of Christ's Sacrifice by which Jesus gave his body as a living immolation for the life of the world. He really made his body a living sacrifice because though slain, he lives. In him death itself suffers a punishment and that is why martyrdom is in fact a birth not an end. Execution is a door to life and so each of us is called to be a Victim and a Priest. So let us put on the garment of holiness, gird ourselves with the belt of chastity. Let Christ be your helmet, let the Cross on your forehead be the unfailing protection. The knowledge of God and Lord be the breastplate; keep living the sweet-smelling incense of prayer. Take up the sword of the Spirit. Let your heart be the Altar. With full confidence in God present, your body for sacrifice. God desires not death but faith. He thirsts not for blood but self- surrender. God is appeased not by slaughter but by offering your free will. This is the Priesthood of a Christian.

(Thoughts based on St. Peter Chrysologus)

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