



## **Sunday of Orthodoxy**

### **The Gospel According to John 1:43-51**

*"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"...*

*"Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"*



### **Antiphon IV**

***"He who so adorns the lilies of the field commands not to be concerned about one's own raiment."***

*"Icon of a man scourged and crucified." (Pope Francis)*

During the first week of lent we heard many times the word "wicked". The readings from Isaiah and the proverbs together with the ones from the psalms brought it to our attention unceasingly. We could not hide from it. Even in a commentary on Saturday's gospel about the Sabbath, John Crysostom speaks about it, saying that the Sabbath of old had its own good things, one of them being to give men a well deserved break from their wickedness. To put a break. In the same way as the virus did with some of our living patterns these days. We see that it works only for a while. The explanation of the meaning

of “wicked” came to me during the week from S., one of the homeless men who visits us almost daily. When he comes to visit us, he often rests, has a cup of coffee and gives us money for the church. He doesn’t stay too long inside, so I don’t get a chance to talk to him too often. This past Wednesday I met him outside and we exchanged a few words. I asked him about what he sees on the streets and how he manages to live with everything that is going on. He told me he hasn’t had a place to rest in a long time, but he preferred to stay outside instead of going to a shelter because of the many problems they have there. He saw me talking to some people who had come to pray, so he asked me whether I spoke for my own or if I invoked God, whenever I talked to people as a priest. He then added that many people use His name as a pretext to lead others astray. “That’s a form of wickedness”. Then he became really passionate when he started to speak about the wickedness in the city. How much it has flooded its streets. “ I do not know how to explain to you how wicked they are. They could just crucify Christ, like that, right there, across the street” he said while spreading his arms out. “ They could just crucify Him nice and clean, if that’s what they do. But instead, they have to make a mess of it. To leave Him swollen and bruised from beatings and scourgings, full of blood and with a crown of thorns on His head. Do you understand what I say?” (he asked me the question three times because he was not sure I would understand it). “But you know, forget about Him. Don’t think about what they do to Him. The question is what do you do? What do you do when all these things happen around you? Are you wicked or do you do good things?”

S. came for prayer during the vigil last Friday. He didn’t have another place to go anyway. I remembered though, seeing him at the vigil, that we did talk about the hours of prayer we have in church. But I never expected him to come. He left around 10:00 pm after he listened to the psalms telling us how “the way of the wicked will perish”.

S. did not speak to me about Christ being crucified in the past. He spoke about the wickedness in which the city is living at the present time; about how it makes a mess in those with whom Christ is suffering today. There is a sense today that evil is not simply satisfied with what it harms but it wants to leave a mess everywhere. “Anything good could come out of it...?”. The way of wickedness will lead to no good, because it will perish, but for those who look for goodness in this mess with no deceit, prayer is granted and the encounter becomes real.

During lent and the long hours of vigil we come before Christ resting at His feet. We try to keep watch within this wickedness that keeps spreading, with a fervent desire to embrace and be embraced by Him who today is wounded by it. It is a desire that we share with every human soul. We know that and that’s why we know we are not alone when we are longing for Him. We are among the many. We look for and pray for this encounter between any human soul and God in His kingdom. The longing is sweet and truthful to any honest desire of the human soul. There is though another longing. A daily one. An unfulfilled one. A longing to meet Him in those with whom He suffers today. Both

longings gently touch each other and we cannot discern which one is deeper. The one that is looking for the encounter with Him, where there will be no sorrow and no sighing because there will be no wickedness or the one that is looking for the face of Christ who needs comfort today. The face we can hardly recognize because of the brutal encounter with the sins of others.

In His kingdom, the joy of the resurrection will be so great that nothing will trouble our soul. One thing though, the longing for comforting Him as we used to do today might touch our joy at times. Not as a form of regret but something that we miss dearly. Maybe Christ is postponing His second coming so He would give us more time for fulfilling our daily longing today. In order to have no more longing in the joy of the resurrection.

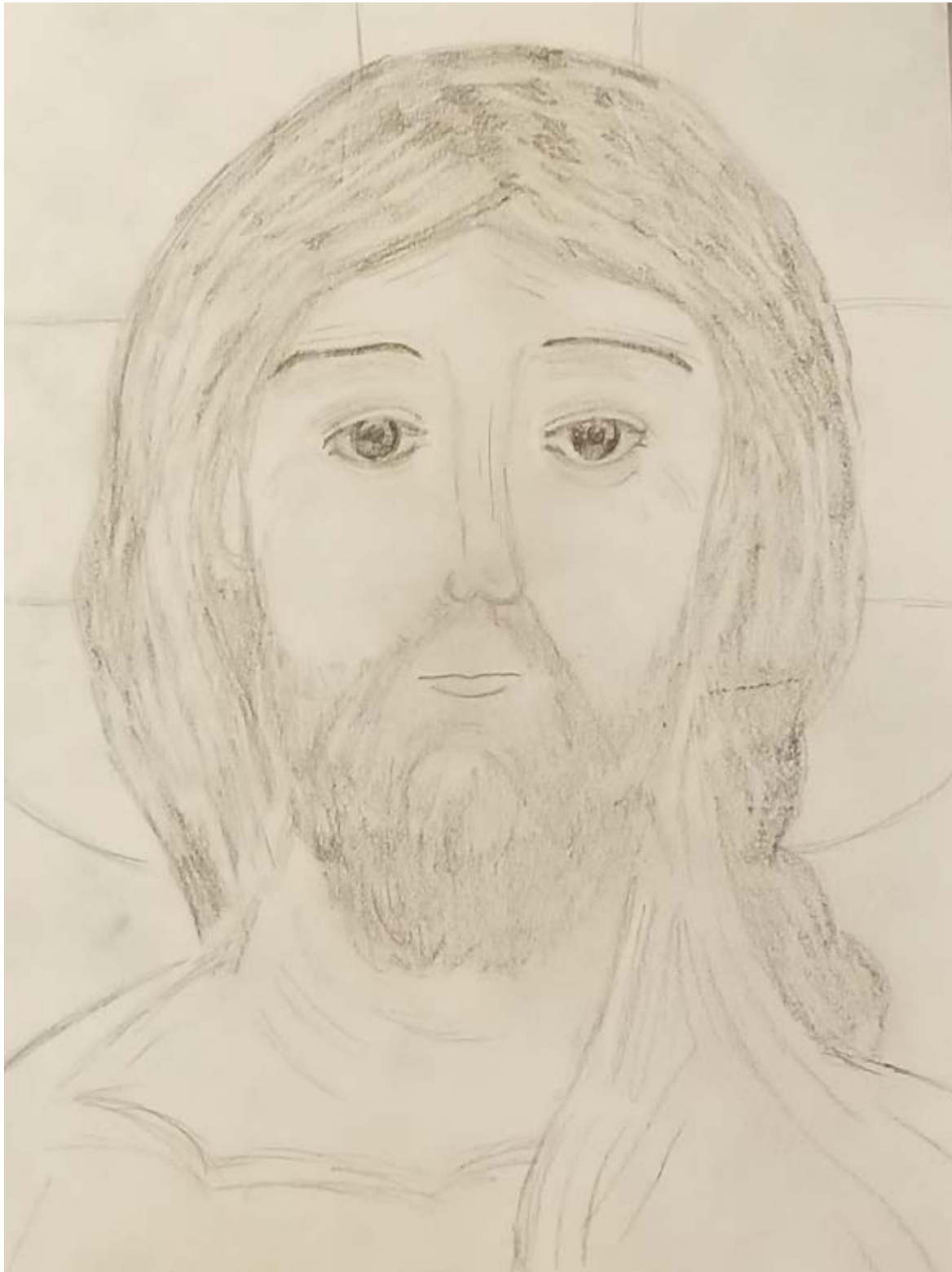
From Monday reading (Isaiah 1:1-20)

***"Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged."***

The wickedness is evil's lack of substance within itself. It cannot stay within itself because it has nothing of its own that stands out. It can't relate with anybody because it cannot tolerate itself, that's why it spreads. Like an eternally unsatisfied customer who always completes surveys to tell you how bad you served him. That's why it cannot do evil but by making a grotesque spectacle in the market square. The wickedness is how evil contaminates because it distorts the reflection of Truth without touching Its very essence. Today in Canada, wickedness is rampant in the streets, never satisfied, raging like a lion, trying to get the poor man.

It was not evil enough that babies were refused the right to live from the womb, but a door keeps opening on giving them to die assisted when they are still in the age of innocence. It was not evil enough that the people were left with no support when wounded by drugs, but the legal weapon had to be legalized so we may know whose fault it is when the profit is growing. It was not evil enough that the suffering people were treated impersonally in hospitals by professionals who ignore their names, but these people are now given the option to choose a hand to end their life. It was not evil enough that the elderly were alone and abandoned in crowded nursing homes, but they were the first to suffer and left to die when everybody else hid in their own homes. It was not evil enough that people with mental disabilities had no decent place to have a life within this competitive society, now they are being given the right to die because that's what the legal system tells them they deserve. It was not enough that our society was one of the richest in the world, but it must now make a business and profit from "helping" the poor. It was not evil enough that people had no access to vaccines in such a rich country, but we

had to steal it from the poor. It is never enough because the evil, through its wickedness, can never stop. The goodness of God, we saw in Genesis, brings everything into being by setting Himself apart from it, where the whole creation, as the fathers say, becomes an icon of God. God does that through order, where everything that comes from Him is given freedom in itself to be as His own icon. So God creates and relates with His creation and his Providence is ongoing, bringing life again and again.



### **From Monday's readings**

*"...When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow..."*

The readings of this week mirror the wickedness from the city with the creation of God. They are not antagonists. The new creation happens today in a system that is collapsing within its own wickedness. We see the signs of it close to us and it is touching to behold this beauty. We see and witness the desire of people to live a life of goodness when their life was deeply harmed by evil. And the more this oppressive wickedness is coming down on their lives, the more they look and are longing for goodness to make a dwelling place where there is life. Recently, we've had people in our community who have seen evil face to face. They were harmed, but they also saw in that the shortness of wickedness and the depth of their own faith. When they come to us and their desire to find Christ is satisfied, that in itself is a moment of grace for the whole community and the whole city. They are the companions of Christ in His suffering and now they meet with Him in the peace and holiness of the church and in the joy of the community. It is a visible sign of a new creation where those who suffered for truth being harmed by the wickedness of evil, behold Christ in His eyes in the chapel, during prayertime.

And by praying with us we have the hope that our prayer during lent is not the one Isaiah was talking about this week. But one that is asking for repentance and receives abundant signs of new life in return.

***Keep in your prayers the catechumens:***

***Eliana, Wayne, Atty and Madison.***

***Hearer: Veneranda and Zachary***

*Please pray for:*

*BettyAnn and Paul.*

Wafaa and Sana (cancer)

Raj (got knifed)

Rejoice

Cassandra's grandmother - Helen

Two children receiving treatment at Sick Kids and their mother Levelin.

Crisent

Ann Brown

Elizabeth

Sifie

Allen

Leon

Romana, Colin, Michael, Peter, Henry, Joanna, George, Kelly;Tom; Candice, Camelia,

Ricky and his family from back home for the hope of reuniting

Madison and her brother Aaron

### **For health and salvation**

very difficult situation for a Christian family from Bangladesh

Sandra

Peter

Angel

Bless

Grace

Swetha family

Atlaw single mom at shelter

Vernevil family

the family of

Kenide

Sathiya

Sena

Vinothiny

Yvienne

Abdul

Sakanthalathevy

Jumke

Naimi

Anish

JOSHUA DANIEL

REALLY HEARTFELT REQUEST FOR PRAYER AS HE IS STRUGGLING TO KEEP ON A GOOD PATH

Maria Lolita Soliman Torres

Jonathan

Richard

Richard

Mary

Elizabeth

Michael

Rejoice

Bill

Robert

Alan

Joanne

deceased (Covid)

Maria