

JESUS AND PREJUDICE

2nd Part

Jesus an Object of Prejudice.

*Adapted n from the book of Fr. P. Ribes, s.j. "To be Like Jesus"
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Intent of these Jottings

- ✓ *To realize why Jesus was at logger heads with the authorities of his time, the High Priests, and the power elite.*
- ✓ *To be aware that to fight against prejudice brings persecution and suffering.*
- ✓ *To be courageous like Jesus to fight all prejudices.*

Glasses and Lenses (A Story)

Many, many years ago, nobody knows why and how, people began putting “specs” on every newborn child. Some specs distorted the colours. Red looked like green, black like white, yellow like blue; worse still! Some lenses changed the very appearance of things and of people. Everybody’s vision became distorted and vitiated.

As time rolled by, each country, each race, each social class, each religion began manufacturing and imposing their own brand of specs and lenses! Children, adolescents, youth, grown ups, men, women, everyone was compelled to wear his or her glasses at all times, and in all places. Nay, even the thought of taking them off was forbidden.

Tradition and authority rigidly enforced the rule: They shouted: What? Do you think of removing your specs? No! Not at all! You will never take off your glasses! It’s forbidden. If you do so, you will be a traitor to our nation! You will be excommunicated from our religion! You will lose your caste!

And people conformed! At home, in the school, on the playground, in the temple, in the church, in college, in the bazaar, every body moved, lived, multiplied, and died with their glasses on. All, like sheep, toed the line. As a result, people saw things and others in different ways. The outcome was fatal!

Whites began shouting at blacks: “You blacks are lousy and dirty!”

Blacks retorted: “And you whites are exploiters and murderers!”

Brahmins yelled: “You, Harijans, are inferior to us, dull and worthless!”

Harijans screamed at the Brahmins: “You, Brahmins, are proud and self-conceited.”

Atheists blew out their tops: “There is no God! You, believers, are a bunch of fools! How stupid you are to believe in a heaven up there, a pie in the sky!”

Believers rejoined: “Of course, there is God! Can’t you see the wonders of God’s creation? Have you no brains, you damn animals!”

Men sneered at women: “All of you women are useless! You are inferior to us! You are good for nothing! It’s we who work hard and built the world!”

Women snorted “Shut up, you big mouths. You, men, are selfish brutes! You exploit us, use us, and when you don’t need us any more, you ditch us!”

The quarrelling voices of humanity kept on increasing,
The yells, the accusations and counter accusations, rose and swelled.
All over the earth one could hear yells and cries:

The Poor are lazy!

The Rich are blood suckers!

Communists, Socialists, Republicans, all liars!

Westerners! Capitalists, all robbers!

Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Madrasis, Goans, Keralites, murdabad!

Employees, Politicians, Government, Police, Exploiters!

Priests, Sadhus, and Holy Men, fakes!

Away, away with them all!

Resentments festered! Hatred increased.

Wars broke out!

Blood was spilt! Innocent people were killed!

Wives were widowed!

Children were orphaned!

The law of the jungle prevailed. Death carried the day!

The world was strewn with graveyards!!!

Finally, Jesus was born in our divided world. He had the courage to pluck off his glasses and look at things and at people as they really are!

Yes, Jesus knew that all human beings are God’s children, made to His image and likeness, that all are basically good and alike in everything.

All have the same rights and privileges.

All have the same longings.

All suffer the same fears and anxieties.

All crave for affection and love.

All are good at heart but weak.

All are lovable and loved by God.

All have a common destiny.

All have the same God and Father, though they call Him by different names.

All are brothers and sisters and belong to one single family!

Jesus was shocked and heart-broken to see a hate-filled world.

A world steeped into prejudice and bigotry.

He grieved to discover that human beings were worse like wolves and at each others throats, at war with one another,

Man against man, family against family, country against country.

There was not love, no unity amongst God’s children but hatred and violence.

With zeal and affection, Jesus began preaching his Gospel of love, peace, forgiveness and mutual acceptance. He strove to cleanse the minds and hearts of all, and remove the false “glasses” from their eyes. In season and out of season, he kept telling one and all:

“My little ones, all of us are brothers and sisters, all of us are Children of God our common Father in heaven! Love one another.” You have heard it said ‘Love your friends and hate your enemies’. But I tell you: Love your enemies as well, and do pray for those who persecute you, so that you will become children of your Father in heaven. He makes the sun shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain both to those who do well and to those who do evil. Love others as you love yourselves. Do to others what you would like others do to you. Remove your false glasses and see the good that is in others.”

The crowds that heard Jesus telling them to remove their glasses and love all people equally, were infuriated.

In anger they yelled:

How can this man tell us that all of us are the same?

How can Jews be like Arabs?

And Blacks like Whites?

And Harijans like Brahmins?

And Foreigners like Nationals?

And Muslims like Hindus?

And Christians like Non-Christians?

And the rich like the poor?

And men like women?

And Pharisees like Publicans?

The sick like the healthy?

The learned like the illiterate?

The masters like the slaves?

It is a fact: we are not the same!

We cannot be the same!

We shall never be the same!

This man is mad!

He is talking nonsense

He is insulting us all!

He is despising our age-old traditions!

He is speaking against our religion!

He is destroying our culture!

He is a dangerous man!

Away with him! Away with him!

At last, for once, in the history of the world,

All the peoples on earth,

Nationals and foreigners,

Educated and uneducated,

Rich and poor,
 Young and old,
 Though torn asunder among them,
 Became united against their common enemy!
 All felt alike! He was a threat to "all"!
 With one voice all clamoured:
 Away with him!
 Crucify him! Crucify him!
 And they crucified him (Pause)

He was too dangerous; he dared to look at the world and at people without glasses!
 He taught men and women to love one another, to share, to care, to forgive!
 Yet, while still hanging from the cross Jesus kept pleading with God his Father:
 Father, forgive them all because they do not know what they do!
 Their vision is blurred and distorted.
 They cannot see things as they really are.
 Have pity on them, forgive them, Father!

By now, since Jesus was done away with, 2000 years have rolled by.
 All along these 20 centuries quarrels went on growing.
 Hatred reigned
 Peace has given way to violence
 Forgiveness to revenge
 Wars multiplied
 Rivers of blood have flowed
 Still today innocent people are burnt alive
 Defenceless brothers and sisters are tortured
 Children are orphaned
 Oh God, how long shall we take to remove our glasses?

1. Gospel Study

N.T. Quotes where Jesus Is made an Object of Prejudice.

Instructions:

- First, go carefully over the Gospel quotes found below
- Next, answer the questions following them.

Mk 2:1-12	The Cure of the Paralytic.
Mk 2: 13-17	The call of Mathew.
Mk 2: 18-20	The Disciples of Jesus were not fasting.
Mk 2: 23-28	Plucking heads of wheat.
Mk 3: 1-6	Curing a man with a crippled hand.
Mk 3: 20-28	Jesus and Beelzebub.
Mk 6: 1-6	Jesus rejected at Nazareth.

Jn 10: 22-42	Jesus is rejected by the Jews.
Mk 7: 1-13	Teaching of the Ancestors.
Mk 11: 27-33	On whose authority?
Mk 12: 13-17	The question of Taxes.
Mt 26: 57-67	Jesus before the council.
Mt. 27: 39-44	Jesus nailed to the Cross.
Mt 27: 62-66	Guard at the grave.
Mt 28: 11-15	Report of the guard.
Lk 7: 36-39	In the house of Simon the Pharisee.
Lk 13: 10-17	Crippled women's healing in the synagogue.
Lk 14: 1-6	Sick man on a Sabbath.
Lk 19: 1-10	Zacchaeus.
Jn 4;5-42	Samaritan Woman.
Jn 8: 1-11	Adulterous woman.
Jn 9: 1-41	The Blind man's healing.
Jn 11:45-54,, 12:9-11	Plot against Jesus
Mt 26:1-5	Plot against Jesus.
Jn 18: 28-38	Jesus before Pilate.
Jn 18: 38-4 & 19: 1-22	Jesus sentenced to death.

2. Answer the Following Questions

1. What did Jesus actually do that provoked such angry reactions from his contemporaries?
2. Why did Jesus act in the way he did? .
3. Were the Jewish authorities, who condemned Jesus to death, in "good" or in "bad"? Why?
4. Explain and justify the words of Jesus excusing those responsible for his execution: "Father, forgive them! They do not know what they do!"
5. Are we fully responsible when we act on prejudice? Why?
6. Yet, knowing that prejudices blind us, can we, in good conscience, remain soaked in them and never question our perceptions? Why?
7. Can we human beings, be 100% free from prejudices as Jesus was: Why?
8. What's likely to happen to us if we break free from the prejudices that affect the social group we belong to, namely, such as sex, caste, social class, region, linguistic group, political affiliation, race, nation, religion, etc? Describe it.

3. Thoughts for Reflection

- Jesus, being a man free from prejudice became himself an object of prejudice.
- The more we try to free ourselves from prejudice, the more people will be prejudiced against us.
- The price for breaking away from prejudice is to become oneself an object of prejudice.

- If we wish to fight prejudice, we have to be prepared to face trials and persecutions.
- If, like Christ, we want to fight prejudice, love all men and women, respect all persons, accept and welcome one and all, we must be ready to be condemned and nailed to the cross like Jesus.
- Let us be aware that the more we appreciate and value a thing, the greater is the danger of falling into prejudices!
- Our love for God – *rather of our image of God* - the love for our religion, the love for our family, the love for our country, the love for money, the love for our language and culture, and specially our self-love, are fraught with of potential prejudices.
- Not for nothing the refrain reads: “Love is blind”.
- This explains why good people, in good faith, down the centuries, killed each other in the name of God and country!
- *In reality, it was not for God or country, but for a biased and prejudiced image of God and country.*
- Religious prejudices – not religion as such - have been the cause of much bloodshed and virulent hatred in the history of mankind!
- To oppose prejudice one has to be ready to stand alone, fight alone and die alone like Jesus.
- It’s more comfortable and secure to slumber in prejudice than to wake up to reality!
- The craving for false security - *don’t rock the boat, maintain the status quo* - explains why the world and ‘the powers that are’ connive at mountains of prejudice.
- Those who stand against prejudice are “Prophets”. Prophets, however, are not welcome by the powers that are and the worshippers of the “status quo”.
- Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Bishop Romero were prophets. they had to pay the price of it with their blood.
- Prophets, for the sake of “peace”, have been always been done away with
- For the world, “peace” is more important than truth! Yet, it is only truth that can bring peace to the world.
- Jesus was condemned for teaching the truth.
- “What is truth?” Pilate asked. Yet Pilate did not wait for Jesus’ answer. He knew it was too inconvenient to know the truth.

APPENDIX ONE. Group Activities

In case you conduct group events such as, recollections, sharing of experiences, debates, panel discussions, question hours, etc on the topic of prejudices, you may hold some activities

Hints for Group Activities:

- Divide the larger group into smaller groups of 5 or 6 each.

- The choice of the activity and of the topic is left to the group.
- Each group will present its activity to the house.
- After each presentation a short analysis and discussion will follow.
- Close down with a shared group prayer.

Suggested activities could be:

- ✓ Role-play
- ✓ Radio-play
- ✓ Active tableaux
- ✓ Skit
- ✓ Mime
- ✓ Dance drama
- ✓ Puppet show
- ✓ Photo-language story
- ✓ Symbolic representation

Possible Topic or Subject Matter for the activities could be:

A transposition to today's life of the trial of Jesus by the powers that are for opposing the existing prejudices and injustices existing in our world. for instance, Mahatma Gandhi, Luther King, Monsignor Romero, and similar ones.

A second approach could be a transposition to a today's setting of one the clashes Jesus had with the Scribes and Pharisees of his time.

- ✓ One member of the group will impersonate Jesus.
- ✓ Jesus could play the role of a worker, a manager, a priest, a teacher, a beggar, a politician, a rich man, etc.
- ✓ The other members of the group may portray people tainted with prejudices similar to those of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' time.

A third approach could be a mock discussion or debating on the opposing views of Jesus and the world, inspired by the Gospel. of Mathew

- ✓ The participants should be asked to reflect and discuss on the opposite values explicitly or implicitly held by Jesus and the other characters mentioned in the text.
- ✓ Then, they will hold an imaginary discussion or debate between Jesus and his opponents. Debatable passages could be:
 - Between Jesus and the Devil. The temptation of Jesus: Mt 6/1-10
 - Between Jesus and his would-be followers: Mt 8/18-22
 - Between Jesus rejected at Nazareth and his town people: Mt13/53-58
 - Between Jesus and Herod on the death of John the Baptist: Mt 14/1-12
 - Between Jesus and his disciples. A woman's faith: Mt 15/21-28
 - Between Jesus and Peter. Coming persecutions: Mt 16/21-23
 - Between Jesus and his disciples. Who is the greatest? Mt 18/1-5

- Between Jesus and Peter. The unforgiving servant: Mt 18/21-35
- Between Jesus and his disciples. Jesus blesses little children: Mt 19/13-15
- Between Jesus and the Rich Young Man and his Disciples: Mt 19/16-30
- Between Jesus and James, John and their mother: Mt 20/20-28
- Between Jesus and Pharisees. Jesus condemns their hypocrisy: Mt 23/13-28
- Between Jesus and his disciples. Gethsemane: Mt 26/36-46
- Between Jesus and his disciples and the crowds. Jesus' seizure Mt 26/47-68
- Between Jesus and the council Jesus' religious trial: Mt 26/57-68
- Between Jesus and Pilate. Jesus' civil trial: Mt 27/11-14
- Between Jesus and the crowds choosing Barabbas: Mt 27/15-26
- Between Jesus and the crowds, Pharisees, passers-by. Crucifixion: Mt 27/32-4

APENDIX TWO Group Prayer

Suggested Order:

- Opening the group prayer by the participants sharing on:
 - ✓ Some of the prejudices they have discovered in their way of **thinking of others, feeling about them, speaking of them and dealing with them.**
 - ✓ Are they prepared to stand alone, if need be, in opposition to their friends, family members and associates to break loose from their prejudices?
 - ✓ What will they do about them?
 - ✓ Ask them to pray to Jesus to give them “**His vision, His attitudes and His courage**”
- Lead the group through a shared, spontaneous and informal prayer.
- You may use the following gospel texts for your group prayer:

Mt 10:16-25	Coming persecutions
Mt 10:26-31	Whom to fear!
Mt 10:32-39	Confessing and denying Christ. Not peace but a Sword!
Mk 13:9-13	Persecutions for Christ's sake
Jn 15:18-21	The world will hate you
Jn 17:9-25	Jesus prays for his disciples.
- Final Hymn: The World Stands in Need of Liberation.