

BODY: CONCEPT OF SOLIDARITY AND PARTICIPATION IN PAUL'S UNDERSTANDING OF REDEMPTION (Continuation)

"Do you know that your bodies are members of Christ?"
1 Corinthians 6: 15

THE WORK OF REDEMPTION

Second Phase: Crucifixion

Keeping in mind the idea that, for the Hebrews, *the sarx-soma* is what binds human beings up with one another, rather than what separates them, we can appreciate better the implication for us of the drama on the Cross. The Cross is both the event and the locus in which the Redeemer voluntarily submitted for destruction the "sinful flesh" which was his, in solidarity with us, and therefore ours too. The event thus sweeps all of us, human beings, into participation, for the *sarx-soma* that was nailed to the cross, was our own.

The process of destruction of the "sinful flesh" happens according to humanity's triple enslavement:

1. *Enslavement to the powers of death*: Paul says in 1 Cor 2:7-8: "But we speak of God's wisdom... None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." God's manoeuvres, in a certain sense, misled the 'rulers of this age', who hoped to defeat Jesus by crucifying him. Contrary to their expectations, all that they achieved was to deprive Jesus of the flesh, which was their only entry for attack. The real protagonist in the drama was not they but Jesus, whose death became the symbol and sacrament of his free and voluntary act of putting off the flesh.
What the sinner could not do because of his/her enslavement, Jesus enacted in solidarity of the sinner as well.
2. *Enslavement to sin*: Paul says in 2 Cor 5:21: "For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin..." By thus 'becoming sin for our sake' Christ willingly accepted the 'end' of sin, which is death (Rom 6:21). But the death he died was not the 'wage of sin', for he never yielded to sin's allurements. It was a death on account of obedience. Whereas all other human beings die 'through sin' (Rom 5:12) a death which confirms their separation from God, Christ, instead, 'died unto sin, once' (Rom 6:10) and transformed the nature of death from within. His death sealed his victory over the power of sin and blazed a trail for humanity's return journey to God.
3. *Enslavement to the law*: By dying, Christ exhausts law's curse (Gal 3:13). By accepting the worst that it can achieve, which is the destruction of his body of flesh, he renders it powerless, for 'the law is binding on a person only during that person's lifetime (Rom 7:1).

What Christ has gone through, in solidarity with the sinner, the sinner can now go through by way of participation. It is the same process of identification and death, of incorporation and crucifixion, but now it is possible for the sinner because Christ has abolished in his and in humanity's *sarx-soma* the triple enslavement that made it impossible.

Paul bridges the gap between Christ's dying to the flesh and the Christians' going through the same experience, it becomes apparent that he presupposes a nexus not only of example, but of a real, voluntary and conscious participation, just as the different parts of the body, having received signal from the brain, contribute their part to the performance of the single act of the body. Only those who identify themselves with Christ's death, and no longer live to themselves, share his resurrection life.

From the book by Bernardita Dianzon, FSP: Glimpses of Paul and His Message