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Today's scripture reading

Fifth Sunday of Lent Year A ( March 29 , 2026 )

chief priest Father Hiroshi Konishi

First reading: Isaiah 50:4-7

Second reading: Philippians 2:6-11

Gospel reading: Matthew 27:11-54

Please pay attention to the first reading.

The Book of Isaiah contains four psalms known as "Songs of the Servants of the Lord." These are all found in Isaiah chapter 40 and beyond. Because the Book of Isaiah was compiled over a long period of time, it is divided into three parts, called First Isaiah, Second Isaiah, and Third Isaiah. The "Songs of the Servants of the Lord" are located in Second Isaiah, and they proclaim the joy of ending the Babylonian exile.

The first song of the Lord's servant (Chapter 42, verses 1-4): The servant sung about here is a gentle Savior who "does not cry out or cry out, ...does not break a bruised reed, nor extinguish a wick as it goes dark." This is in stark contrast to the other servant who appears just before, who "treads on rulers like a potter treads on clay... turning them into lumps of earth." This servant of the Lord is the one who "brings out perfect judgment" (Chapter 42, verse 1).

The second song of the Lord's servant (Chapter 49, verses 1-9): The servant's mission here is to speak the word of God. He speaks God's word with a "sharp sword" and with a "mouth" that proclaims God's will. In this way, he brings Israel back to God. He "will raise up the tribes of Jacob and bring back the remnant of Israel." Therefore, this servant of the Lord is "a light to the nations and brings my salvation to the ends of the earth."

The third song of the Lord's servant (Chapter 50, verses 4-11): This section includes today's first reading. This servant of the Lord may refer to the many

prophets who appeared in Israel. The prophets were persecuted and suffered at the hands of rulers and the people. Similarly, the servant of the Lord must also endure a life of patience and suffering.

The fourth song of the Lord's servant (Chapter 52, Verses 13-53, Verse 12): In this song of the Lord's servant, the meaning of the servant's suffering is revealed. "For he was pierced for our transgressions, and he was crushed for our iniquity" (Chapter 53, Verse 5). He suffered as a substitute for the sins of mankind. "The Lord laid on him all our sins."

The Lord's servants are gentle, they speak God's word, they are persecuted by people, and they bear the suffering for the sins of others.

By the way, why did the Lord's servant endure persecution? Let's refer to the explanation by Father Amemiya of the Tokyo Archdiocese. If we carefully read today's passage, the relationship between the Lord's servant and God will become clear. A direct translation of verses 4 and the first half of verse 5 is as follows:

The Lord God gave me the tongue of his disciple.  
To understand, to help tired people  
He awakens the words  
In the morning, in the morning  
He awakens my ears  
In order to listen and obey, as a disciple  
The Lord God opened my ears

Every morning I renew my relationship with God. With open ears I hear His word, and with a tongue given to me I help the weary.

The latter part of verse 5 says, "I did not resist; I did not retreat." This means that he did not resist his relationship with God, which is renewed every morning, and he did not retreat in the face of the persecution from verse 6 onward.

It was through this renewed relationship with God every morning that this servant of the Lord gained patience.