

Woman Behold Your Son

John 19:26-27

Beholding and Sorrow in Women Discipleship

By

Revd Isaias Ezequiel Chachine

As we journeyed through the *Holy-Week* from Palm Sunday, the Good News today is that our failure to understand what might it mean to listen to God's Son or to live according to the standards of Jesus' of Nazareth does not, however, absolve us from the challenge to do so or from keeping on trying again and again, despite any failure we may face on the way as we keep on trying. Particularly, in our present world besieged by widespread poverty, gender-based violence, persistent hunger, miseries, illnesses, and injustice that continue to afflict many mothers of modern societies, there is no room for anyone to stand idle and turn another cheek, while mothers and their children are constantly being overwhelmed by sorrow and grief in their attempt to behold their children in gaze of gender-based violence and other social ills. The symbolism of Good Friday, in which Jesus succumbs in pain and agony before facing his own death on the cross in a humiliating and thorny gaze of his mother can only help us to face the hard reality of how the challenges, we face should be confronted head-on, lest they so put many countless mothers in pain and agony. Yes, the drama of Good of Friday may just be a familiar symbol to most of us but it is one of those terrible symbols of pain and sorrow which most of us may not want to see it happening again. It helps us to realise how Jesus remains a message not only for the past but also for the present and the future. How imperative is, in the challenges of the moment for us, as part the church-in-discipleship that is called to behold, to include the need for a more pragmatic rearticulating of the ministerial model of Jesus of Nazareth in our discipleship agenda. A rearticulating of what it means to listen to God's Son releasing his last breath on the cross in the tormenting presence of his mother and other curious onlookers. It is a story that has become familiar to most us in the event of gender-based violence we face in most of our homes and in society at large. As we followed Jesus towards Golgotha, our journey, towards the *Holy-Week*, has helped us to understand that, in the midst of the threatening challenges confronting the world, in the face of coronavirus, it is imperative for the church-in-discipleship to insist on the model of ministry and justice as found on the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:20) and John 19:26-27, in its missionary priorities. As we join the wider church and other faith-based communities in the struggle against COVID-19 we have realised that the mission of the Church in discipleship cannot concern itself exclusively with the personal, inward, spiritual, and vertical aspects of people's lives. Since such an approach may suggest a contrast completely foreign to the Jesus tradition as interpreted by Matthew and John.¹ In our frail understanding, as we try to listen to Jesus of Nazareth, the Good News is that we will always be confronted by a disjunction between what 'Jesus actually taught and what happened to his teaching.' This is particularly 'true of his injunction to love our enemies which, more than any other commandment, reflects the true nature of Jesus' boundary-breaking ministry. Mother "beholding thy son" forms the culmination of Jesus' way which inevitably finds its true accomplishment on the cross, sealing the pattern of women discipleship. Indeed, there is no great consolation than the one found in Jesus as he cared for his disciples and all those who came to him for healing and solace. Where we seem to fail as a church or as a nation today there is a message of Good News that comes with a Jesus who at the mountain of the Transfiguration as well as in Golgotha, when his disciples, overtaken by fear, fell on the ground, came to their aid, helping them to stand up again, reaffirming them that everything would be alright, as they undertook the journey leading down the mountain. Likewise, in Palm Sunday's readings, the message of Prophet Isaiah (50:4-9a) and that of St Paul's to the Philippians (50:4-9a) do come to our own reaffirmation and encouragement, as they try to help us understand the challenging realities and difficulties surrounding the complexities and perils that come as one try to understand what might it mean to listen to God's Son as he asks his mother to behold the son on the cross.

Amen

¹ See Bosch, David J.: *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Orbis Books, New York 2007

