

Mar 7, 2021 – Leader’s Guide – Small Group “The Darkness Within Us”

Read John 18:13-27

1. **Verse 14:** What Caiaphas intended for evil against Jesus, God directed from the beginning for the good of all the world. While we may never know God's specific purposes and plans for each and every circumstance, what wisdom and comfort do we gain in trusting God's sovereignty over all things?

Trusting in God's sovereignty is not a relinquishing of careful and agonised reflection amidst suffering, or to sit in suffering with true pain and grief. Some evil and suffering we endure are morally absurd and cannot be rationalised from our limited perspective. Trusting in God's sovereignty is also not a lazy way to "explain" away evil or suffering. Rather, trust is a disposition that acknowledges our human limits and weakness while also acknowledging the supremacy and goodness of God who alone has the power to make sense and transform evil for good, even though we may never know it or see it. In that sense, trust in God's sovereignty is wisdom: to rightly see ourselves and to rightly see who God is. And trust in God's sovereignty is comfort: sparing us from the impossibly divine burden of trying to be omniscient about all circumstances and what lies underneath every situation or evil or suffering.

2. **Verse 17:** When the slave girl asked Peter if he was one of Jesus' followers, Peter replied, "I am not." Peter's response was a repudiation of Jesus' self-revelation as the "I am", the God of Israel revealed through Moses. How do we as Christians repudiate and deny Jesus' self-revelation to the world whenever we fall into sin and act defiantly and disobediently against His laws?

We bring scandal and disrepute to Jesus' Name whenever we as Christians do not live up to our confession, profession, and allegiance to Jesus' laws. The laws of God express His personality and character. To defy His laws then is to defy who God is. And we bear false witness in our midst and before the world whenever we disobey and fall short of God's laws. Thus, as St. Paul said, the Name of God is blasphemed among the nations whenever there is shameful hypocrisy in the Church.

3. **Verse 18:** Around the charcoal fire, Peter was counted among the guilty, among those who detained and bound Jesus. Peter's guilt was brought to light by the charcoal fire. Much later in John's gospel, another charcoal fire that Jesus had prepared would be the setting around which Peter would be reinstated. What are the kinds of "charcoal fire" in our Christian tradition that serve to illuminate our sin while also restoring us to a right relationship with God?

There will be a variety of answers but examples of "charcoal fires" in the Church is the various liturgies and services, prayers of confession, the rite of absolution, the sacramental celebration of the Eucharist and holy baptism,

small group conversations and Bible studies, mealtime and family gatherings, etc.

4. **Verses 19-24:** Despite being bound and interrogated by Annas, Jesus was the One in total charge of the conversation. Jesus was the One who finally questioned and uncovered the evil in those who accused Him. How could we emulate Jesus in His integrity, truth-telling, and defiance against evil when we stand to face injustice and corruption?

We each have been given a voice to speak out against evil in our society, in our neighbourhood, even in our relationships and friendships. Our Christian voice must give speech in accordance with the teachings of the Bible and the Church, descended from Jesus and His Apostles, to disseminate among ourselves and especially to those who do not know them. Let us pray to God to grant us courage and the integrity to speak up and out, to have compelling arguments both in our lips and in our lives, to strongly persuade and to dismantle falsehoods and unjust principalities and strongholds. As Jesus promised to His early disciples, the Holy Spirit will grant us the words and the integrity before the oppressor so that what is hidden would be brought to the light, what is evil would be corrected, and what is wayward would be taken captive under the lordship and rule of Jesus Christ.