

“Another is in Me”
Sermons for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in Holy Week, 2008
King’s College Chapel, Halifax, at High Mass
Dr Wayne J. Hankey
Carnegie Professor of Classics

“In all their affliction he was afflicted...and he bare them, and carried them” Isaiah 63.9
Monday in Holy Week

A principal character in a thriller keeps having an experience common to us all, even if outside novels it rarely happens in this form: Pauline keeps meeting herself in the street. Her likeness “comes up towards me, and I am terrified—terrified—one day it will come and meet me.” (96) Pauline was right to be afraid. There is indeed nothing more terrifying than self-knowledge, nothing for which we are less adequate—partly at least because most experiences of self-knowledge are encounters with our inadequacies. Pauline reveals her fear in a chapter whose title is our occupation in Holy Week: “The Doctrine of Substituted Love.” Substituted Love is asserted in tonight’s Lesson, “In all their affliction he was afflicted...and he bare them, and carried them,” exhibited and communicated in tonight’s Gospel and in every Eucharist: “Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take eat this is my body.”” (Mark 14.22). Stanhope, the healer in *Descent into Hell*, which concerns the operation and refusal of substituted love, asks Pauline: “But that I don't quite understand. You have friends; haven't you asked one of them to carry your fear.” She has not asked. She shall. She shall be carried and carry.

Scripture is two-sided on our capacity to carry burdens for another. One account is strongly negative. Listen to the Psalmist:

No man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give a ransom unto God for him...For too costly is the redemption of their souls, so that he must leave that alone forever. (Psalm 49.7&9)

What the Psalm describes, St Peter enacted:

Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, you shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not disown you in any way. Likewise also said they all. (Mark 14.29-31)

Terrible self-knowledge awaits self-confident Peter when his Master became a mockery of powerlessness:

Some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to hit him...and they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely you are one of them: for you are a Galilaean. He began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom you speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept. (Mark 14.65-72)

“No man can by any means redeem his brother” is taken up at the foot of the cross and transformed into the ultimate mockery of the redeemer king:

He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. (Mark 15.31&32)

There is, however, another reality. One for which each of us has the greatest possible need; indeed, without it, absolutely literally, none of us can live. The reality asserted by Isaiah: “he bare them, and carried them” is demanded of us by St Paul as the substance of our life in Christ: “Bear ye one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6.2)

Pauline doubts that her burden of fear can be carried for her by another. Stanhope responds:

Not if you insist in making a universe for yourself. If you want to disobey and refuse the laws that are common to us all, if you want to live in pride and division and anger, you can. But if you will be part of the rest of us, and live and laugh and be ashamed with us, then you must be content to be helped. You must give your burden up to someone else, and you must carry someone else’s burden...I am sure that this is a law of the universe, and not to give up your parcel is as much to rebel as not to carry another’s. You will find it quite easy if you let yourself do it. (99)

Five weeks ago, when we began Lent together, I told you of a small group of women enclosed in the Monastery of the Precious Blood on Prince Edward Island. Their work is reparation accomplished by the perpetual adoration of what we contemplate and react this week, the sacrifice of Christ in his shed Blood. Each of the sisters does continually by prayer what Stanhope offered Pauline, through the communion Christ established between us all, she carries in prayer the spiritual burdens of others. This is what they write of their work in their *Covenant of Love*:

Each one’s joys and hopes, sorrows and distresses, especially of the poor, of those who suffer, - they are our joys, hopes, sorrows and distresses, and there is nothing of a truly human nature which fails to resound in our hearts.

These women bear up to God our sin and need, known in both their particularity and universality, and in their inner character: the fear, loss, misery, despair, anger... They enter and carry the great weight of others in order on their behalf to pass on to the Redeemer. Because of all our affliction, he was afflicted...and he carried us, there is in this also lightless and joy of spirit.

Weakness is no impediment to carrying the burden of another. The enacted formulation of this fundamental law of the universe was made in 203 A.D., during the persecution of Christians under the Emperor Septimius Severus, by an imprisoned African slave while in childbirth:

She not only endured martyrdom but in a sentence defined the Faith. Her name was Felicitas; she was a Carthaginian; she lay in prison; there she bore a child. In her pain she screamed. Her jailors asked her how, if she shrieked at that, she expected to endure death by the beasts. She said: ‘Now *I* suffer what *I* suffer; then another will be in me who will suffer for me, as I shall suffer for him.’ In that, Felicitas took her place forever among the great African doctors of the Universal Church.¹

“In all their affliction he was afflicted...and he bare them, and carried them.” “He brake it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take eat this is my body.”” Let each of us lay claim to the promise: “Another will be in me who will suffer for me.”

¹ Charles Williams, *The Descent of the Dove. A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 28 quoting from *The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas*. The Feast of St Perpetua and her companions is March 6.

“They compelled a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene,... who was coming in from the country...to bear
his cross” Mark 15.21
Tuesday in Holy Week