

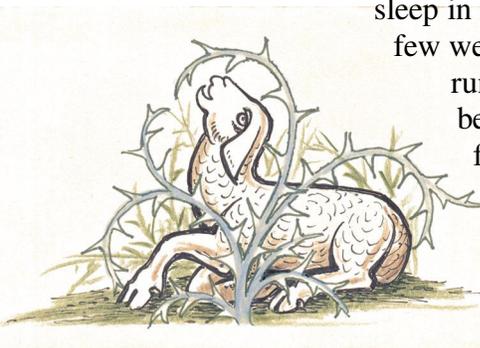
January 20, 2019

Happy Covenant Sunday to you all! Blessings on this day!

Sr. M. Isabel asked me to share a reflection with you, so I gladly comply. Today is a special day in our Schoenstatt world that I'm sure you're all aware of. On January 20, 1942, our father and founder freely chose to go to the concentration camp. It was a crucial day for our Schoenstatt Family. You might know it as the "Second Milestone" or the "axis" of our Schoenstatt history. Why was it so important? Because it became a symbol for the highest form of the covenant of love, which we call the *Inscriptio*. Father Kentenich himself explained: "What do we mean by the *Inscriptio*? (...) Love of the cross, total surrender (...). [W]e understand the *Inscriptio* to be the prayer: Dear God, if it adds to your joy, then I ask you to send me the cross and suffering!" (Brushstrokes, Vol 3, p. 43)

What?! He says we are *asking* for suffering?? Why on earth would we want to do that? A story about a little lamb might help us to understand:

Somewhere in Europe shepherds formerly had a rather strange way of educating their sheep. When a shepherd noticed that one of his lambs was especially stubborn, always wandering from the flock and never listening to his master, the shepherd would take that little lamb and – yes, this next part sounds terrible – break its legs... How cruel it seems! But wait, once we know the reason, it may sound different. What did the shepherd do next? He took that little creature into his arms and placed it on his shoulders. The helpless lamb could not do anything without its shepherd now. It was completely dependent upon him. The shepherd took the lamb everywhere he went. He fed it from his hand, stroked it gently, let it sleep in his arms, and lovingly took care of its every need. After a few weeks of this one-on-one care, the lamb fully healed and could run about freely again. But there was a difference now. Where before that little lamb would run *away* from the shepherd at its first opportunity, now it is the first to run *toward* him. That little lamb has been transformed from a disobedient little rebel into the most faithful member of the flock. This lamb has been so well formed that the shepherd can depend on it to lead the other sheep. The lamb has become a leader of the flock, a model sheep, and the favorite of his shepherd.



Thus, a seemingly cruel deed became the greatest gift that the shepherd could have given to his little lamb...

We too are that lamb. The pain and suffering in our lives is our divine Shepherd's invitation to a more intimate union with him. Our dear God wants to carry us close to his heart, but sometimes we are too busy going our own way, that we don't even notice God's call. Perhaps, just perhaps, it makes some sense now why someone might even dare to ask for suffering... Perhaps we even might even find ourselves asking him to break our legs, so that he can carry us, transform us... But only a lamb who believes that the Shepherd does this out of LOVE can dare to ask for this.

Now I am *not* suggesting that you all make the *Inscriptio* dedication. If you feel called to do so, then Amen! I am merely inviting you to think about the suffering in your life (which I know you all certainly have), and to try to see it as it really is: *God's invitation to come closer to him*. Look at this suffering, call it by name, write a list. Then, try to see it all in the light of his immense LOVE for you.

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