

# When he has tested me, I shall come out like GOLD

(Job 23:10)



## Reflection:

May 2022

I was thinking of an apt title for the last chapter of the book 'The Nightingale of the Holy Eucharist' - a book dedicated to Ajna, a Jesus Youth who left us for her heavenly abode on 21 January 2022. Inspired by the spirit of God, the word 'Kintsugi' came to my mind. Kintsugi is the centuries-old Japanese art of repairing broken ceramic pieces. When we break a bowl or vase, we usually think of it as 'garbage'. But this Japanese art encourages us to see the potential for beauty in the broken pieces. The kintsugi artists wipe the pieces clean and carefully put the broken pottery pieces back together and glues them with gold. When dried, the pot will be an even more beautiful piece of art than the first one as it has attractive seams of gold glinting in the conspicuous cracks.

The Kintsugi-made pottery is exceedingly valuable. It is not the clay that makes up the value of the pottery, but the gold alloy used to join the shattered ceramic pieces. There is no attempt to disguise the extent of damage; in fact the precious veins of gold accentuates the damage the pottery has suffered. However what we really see is a more magnificent piece of art than the original, revitalized with a new look and life.

Similarly, Ajna's life was also hampered by severe injuries. In a sense, her life had become a failure in every way. Yet the world today looks at Ajna's life with such interest because she subjected her life to a Kintsugi. It would have been entirely possible for her to question God's love, and she could have cried upon seeing the disfigurement that sarcoma inflicted on her face. She could have remained confined to a room avoiding meeting people or skipping Mass as some of us do when we have a headache or some fatigue. But she did not. Although she was sure that death was imminent, how enthusiastically she completed the Emmaus course activities during her final days! The lyrics she penned for an activity of the session, a life of Praise and Thanksgiving, reveal her vision of life. A person whose days are numbered is thanking God beholding the pain and wounds in her life. Her parting made those words more significant and poignant. It became a prayer that we should all meditate on. How many times she must have meditated on these lines in her heart before scribbling them down on that piece of paper!

Even when the miracle becomes late  
When my faith deteriorates  
When I am unable to love  
When prayers remain unheard  
When my strength weakens  
When I can't see a future  
When I am hopeless and jobless  
When I am sick and fed up  
When I remain less fortunate  
When I lose heart  
When my dreams shatter  
I'll still praise and thank my Lord...

Ajna did not blame God for her pain or complain about what she had lost. Instead, she thanked God for all the little things in her life, such as the fruit of her plants and the blooms on her rose bush. Ajna was an artist who painted beautifully. The most wonderful mastery of her life was the beautiful art of subduing the afflictions of her mind and soul daily with golden healing, regardless of how distressed she was physically. This was through her love and devotion for the Holy Eucharist and the daily reception of it. Her conviction that the Holy Eucharist is the source of all her strength was unwavering. It became the 'kintsugi' that made her life whole and attractive.

As darkness fell around Ajna, the words she scribbled in her notebook are a testament as to whom she placed all her entire trust and hope in. 'Despite the fact that there is nothing in the world to hope for, there are no answers to the questions I ask every day, and life does not seem to make sense, I am reminded every day by the Holy Eucharist that there is a living God who makes everything evolve for the better and takes care of those who are dependent on Him and who sustains till the end'.

My Lord, even in my life there are many areas that need your golden healing. Instead of succumbing to the trials and temptations of life, let me too nourish myself to greater strength through a faithful reception of the Holy Eucharist and meditation of the Divine Word. Like Job, I too want to emerge as pure gold through the crucible of afflictions.

- Fr. Joseph Kumbuckal

He is an Asst. Prof. of English and Jesus Youth Chaplain at Sacred Heart's College, Kochi, Kerala and has co-authored a book on Ajna, his student and later his colleague.