

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community

5TH SUNDAY OF LENT

Cycle B - March 21, 2021

OPENING PRAYER



Guide: *Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.*

All: **Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God, my savior.**

Leader: Remember that your compassion, O Lord, and your love are from old.

All: **In your kindness remember me, because of your goodness, O Lord.**

Guide: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send, Lord your spirit and renew the face of the earth. Oh God, that you have instructed the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us through the same spirit that always enjoy her divine consolation. By Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIRST READING [Jeremiah 31 (31-34)]

The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant, and I had to show myself their master, says the Lord.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and relatives how to know the Lord. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the Lord, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more.

In the fifth "episode" of the history of salvation during this Lent, the Church offers us the well-known text of the prophet Jeremiah that speaks about the new covenant. The prophet reminds his contemporaries that God had freed them from slavery ("... I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt ...") and established a covenant with them. But that alliance had been broken over and over again, never at God's initiative, but as a product of the people's infidelity.

Now, surprisingly, when the logical thing was to expect a claim, a scolding or a punishment, what God offers, is more love. A love that will translate into another covenant. It will no longer be an external pact, of a political nature, but an internal commitment, based on a relationship of intimacy. If in the past covenants were written on stone tablets, now it will be written on hearts.

(1) Read 2 Corinthians 3 (3-6). Reflect. Share with the group.

(2) Read Hebrews 8 (1-13). Reflect. Share with the group.

(3) Analyze this equation-analogy: External fulfillment is to a stone as Conversion is to the heart

(4) Raymond avoids being unfaithful to his wife because he promised to do so when he married. Jules cannot be unfaithful to his wife or to the thought of her, because he loves her very much. Lou avoids sin by taking care not to break the commandments and thus avoid hell. Michael avoids sin because it causes him pain to offend God. Which of these attitudes do you identify with? What is the difference?

SECOND READING [Hebrews 5 (7-9)]

In the days when Christ Jesus was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

The letter to the Hebrews has as its central theme the priesthood of Jesus. Christ is the true and only High Priest who can intercede for all before God for the forgiveness of sins. And He is not only the intermediary priest, but at the same time is the victim of the sacrifice. A perfect sacrifice that is not, like the previous ones, to fulfill a ritual, but to truly eliminate the debt caused by our sins. This letter is inspired by the priestly liturgy of the temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus Christ has not presented to God the offerings of victims, as the priests of the temple did, but his prayer, very intense, carried out from his human nature that had to undergo suffering and death. By his extraordinary sacrifice, He becomes the bridge that heals the gap between men and God because of sin. It is also the source from which universal salvation springs. It is convenient to review what is written: «... he offered supplications ... to the one who could save him from death ...». It is not that he asked to be spared physical death. It is about the liberation of death as a final destination. With his resurrection, death ceased to be the last stage of human life, since a life is created beyond this earthly life. Death is no longer "the one that wins the game." Death has been defeated, and defeated forever. His prayer was heard, for He was delivered from death, and not only that, but He made merits for the same resurrection for all of us.

- (1) Jesus "presented prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears." He knows our worst anguish. How do you feel knowing that Jesus Christ knows your pain, suffering and anguish? Do we have to bear our sorrows alone?
- (2) Jesus was always ready to comfort those who suffered. Do you think He already finished that mission? Do you know of a case where Jesus Christ gave comfort to a person in distress?
- (3) Regarding the previous question, does the comfort that the Lord sends to those who suffer, does it come only from heaven? How else does it manifest?
- (4) Is there anything that prevents you from cooperating with the Lord in transmitting his comfort to those who suffer? Are you doing it?

GOSPEL [John 12 (20-33)]

Some Greeks who had come to worship at the Passover Feast came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me.

"I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." The crowd there heard it and said it was thunder; but others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come for my sake but for yours. Now is the time of judgment on this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself."

He said this indicating the kind of death he would die.



El evangelio de Juan contiene a partir del capítulo 13 la despedida de Jesús, hecha ante sus mas íntimos. El texto de este domingo se toma de lo último que se registra este evangelista de la vida pública de Jesús, antes de entrar a esa sección de sus últimas conversaciones. Este episodio ocurre en Jerusalén, donde ya Jesús se encontraba para cumplir su misión.

El evangelio de Juan presenta la cruz como el lugar de la victoria de Jesucristo. Para ayudar a entender el valor salvador de su muerte, Jesús usa la imagen del grano de trigo, que ha de ser enterrado y morir para generar nueva vida. Del mismo modo, él sabe que debe morir para transmitirnos la vida que no se acaba. Así como no duda en entregar su propia vida, invita a sus seguidores a hacer lo mismo.

El evangelista no trata de maquillar la turbación de Jesús. Es lógico que esté preocupado ante lo que se le viene encima, y confiesa que siente miedo. Sin embargo, vemos que la convicción que tiene de que es necesario el sacrificio para que se realice el plan de Dios, es mas fuerte que el temor que siente. Por eso, no siente que se ha decidido su muerte en contra de su voluntad, sino que él está convencido de que es necesaria, y va al sacrificio libremente, movido solamente por el amor inmenso que siente por la humanidad, la cual se va a beneficiar de ese acto.

La voz del cielo que se oye indica que el Padre escucha la oración de Jesús, y sirve de señal para los que están con él, para que puedan entrar en el misterio de la verdadera identidad de Jesús, y poder comprender lo que su muerte significará. La cruz de Jesús, que a primera vista podría parecer un fracaso, es en realidad la culminación del proceso de entrega de su vida. Pues dando la vida, Jesucristo vence el poder del mal y libera a todos los que estaban bajo su dominio. Y no lo hace solamente por los de su patria o su raza, por eso dice: «...*atraeré a todos hacia mí...*»

The Gospel of John contains from chapter 13 the farewell of Jesus, made before his most intimate. The text for this Sunday is taken from the last recorded words of the public life of Jesus by this evangelist, before entering that section of his last conversations. This episode takes place in Jerusalem, where Jesus was already there to fulfill his mission.

The Gospel of John presents the cross as the place of victory for Jesus Christ. To help understand the saving value of his death, Jesus uses the image of the grain of wheat, which must be buried and die to generate new life. In the same way, he knows that he must die to pass on the life that does not end. Just as he does not hesitate to lay down his own life, he invites his followers to do the same.

The evangelist does not try to mask Jesus' embarrassment. It is logical that he is worried about what is coming to him, and he confesses that he feels fear. However, we watch his conviction that sacrifice is necessary for God's plan to be carried out; his conviction is stronger than his fear. For this reason, he does not feel that his death has been decided against his will, but convinced that it is necessary, he submits to sacrifice freely, moved only by the immense love he feels for humanity, which is going to benefit from that act.

The voice from heaven that is heard indicates that the Father hears the prayer of Jesus, and serves as a signal for those who are with him, so that they can enter into the mystery of the true identity of Jesus, and be able to understand what his death will mean . The cross of Jesus, which at first glance might seem like a failure, is actually the culmination of the process of giving his life. For by giving his life, Jesus Christ conquers the power of evil and liberates all those who were under his dominion. And he does not do it only for those of his land, or his own race, that is why he says: «... I will attract everyone to me ...»

- (1) Is there any way for the seed to bear fruit, other than by dying? What is the function (mission) of the seed?
- (2) What is our mission in this life? Is there something that is preventing us from carrying out that plan?
- (3) What good thing can happen when we decide to resign living focused mostly on ourselves?
- (4) Try to recall names of people who gave their lives for others or for Christ.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*