

## **5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR B 2021**

The scriptures today are a preparation for the coming events of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. The gospel sees the death of Jesus as the manifestation of God's love for us in the new covenant. Just as Jesus became the "Promised Messiah of Glory" by offering His life for others, we, too, must possess Heaven by dying to self and by spending our lives in self-giving and self-sacrificial service.

The first reading, taken from the book of the Prophet Jeremiah, explains how God replaced the Old Covenant of Judgment with a New Covenant of Forgiveness of sins written upon the hearts of His people Israel. This New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah was fulfilled through Jesus' life, death and Resurrection.

In the second reading, the writer reminds us that it is through Jesus' suffering and death, in obedience to His Father's will, that He established the New Covenant. We cannot therefore adequately appreciate the "blood of the new and eternal covenant" that we share in the Eucharist without recognizing the joys and sufferings, triumphs and setbacks that marked the history of God's covenant relationship with His people.

The Gospel hints at the inner struggle of Jesus in accepting the cup of suffering to inaugurate the New and everlasting Covenant. However, Jesus accepts the cross as the stepping stone to His death, resurrection and exaltation. It is the way of glorifying His Heavenly Father and of being glorified by His Father. It is also the way by which He draws all people into the saving action of God.

Using the metaphors of the "dying grain of wheat" and of "surrendered life": Jesus explains to His apostles that it was by His suffering and death that He was bringing life and liberation to the sinful world, just as a grain of wheat sown in the field ceases to remain itself and kind of dies so as to germinate and grow into a plant which produces many new grains of wheat. So, the "lifting up" of Jesus on the cross and later into Heavenly glory by His resurrection and ascension, is the assurance of our own exaltation and glorification, provided we accept to die to ourselves for the sake of others.

Today's Gospel teaches us that eternal life is possible mainly by the death to self through suffering and service. Salt for example gives its taste by dissolving in water. A candle gives light by burning its wick and melting its wax. Loving parents sacrifice themselves so that their children can enjoy a better life than they themselves had. Let us then pray that we may acquire this self-sacrificial spirit, especially during this remaining part of Lent.

Only a life spent for others will be glorified here in this world and later in Heaven. We know that the world owes everything to people who have spent their time and talents for God and for their fellow human beings. Mother Teresa, for instance and many other great saints put others before themselves. Plus, others like Martin Luther King Jr, Mahatma Ghandi to mention but a few. May we too spend ourselves for others.

Someone once said that it is better to burn out than it is to rust. So, let us continue living this Lenten period "burning out," spending our time and talents for others around us by our humble, selfless and self-giving service. John Wesley says: *"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can"*.

Following in the footsteps of Christ our Lord and Savior, may we strive to make a difference in the lives of other people by our sacrificial service to those around us in our families, in our schools, in the workplaces and in our communities. Amen.