

For where there is love, there is no labor, or if there be labor, it is a labor of love (St. Augustine)

Lectio Divina of the Fifth Sunday of Lent - Year B

Priest: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for this evening of Lectio Divina to read, meditate and pray your life-giving words for our spiritual nourishment. Thank you for loving us by sending your beloved Son Jesus to save us and keep us in your love. Loving Father, may the holy sacrifice of your Son cleanse our soul, strengthen our heart, pardon our past and restore us in your peace. May we always adore you by uniting ourselves in His holy sacrifice, the sacrament of your divine love. May we learn to sacrifice our own comfort, plans and dreams if it is not for your glory and the good of others. Lord Jesus, You chose to self-sacrifice Yourself, Setting aside all Your personal glories. We thank You Lord Jesus for Your act of love! Your action has drawn us closer to You. Teach us to model in smaller things, To sacrifice in order to help others.

I Reading: A reading from the book of 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.

The Word of the Lord/Thanks be to God

Commentary: The first reading explains how God will replace the Old Covenant of Judgment with a New Covenant of Forgiveness of sins. Why was there a need for God to make a New Covenant? It was because the people, priests and kings had broken the original one.

How would the New Covenant be different from the old? It would be written on the hearts of the people and not on the stones and hence the New Covenant could not be erased by cowardly leaders. The passage reads as follows: "I will place My Law within them and write it upon their hearts." This New Covenant does not abolish the earlier Covenants with Noah, Abraham and Moses, for these earlier covenants are really the progressive stages of the history of the one Great Covenant between the one God and His people. This New or Renewed Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah has been fulfilled, at least in part, through Jesus who says in John 13:34 "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another"

Responsorial Psalm 51 **Create a clean heart in me, O God.**

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me.

R. Create a clean heart in me, O God.

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

R. Create a clean heart in me, O God.

Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me.

I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall return to you.

R. Create a clean heart in me, O God.

II Reading: A Reading from the book of 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 Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God

Commentary: In the second reading, St. Paul tells the Hebrews that it is by His suffering and death, in obedience to His Father's will, that Jesus established the New Covenant. St Paul explains that the new and better covenant was inaugurated through the High Priest Jesus' offering of Himself as the one perfect sacrifice for sins. Jesus' human life was not a script that he passively followed but it was a life that he chose freely, making the will of God his own by his obedience which led him to suffering and death.

Gospel Reading: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. 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.

The Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ/ Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Meditation on the Grain of Wheat: In order to illustrate his sincere love and selfless sacrifice, Jesus uses the example of a grain of wheat. “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But when it dies, it produces much fruit”

What can we learn from the grain of wheat? In the natural world, we know that when a seed dies, it actually germinates and gives a new life, bearing much fruit. Jesus says that the grain of wheat must first die in order to bear much fruit. If a grain remains safe in the sack, it remains a single grain but if it falls into the earth and dies, then a greater life force comes out of it with countless wheat. Jesus describes himself as wheat. Through his death, he rose to new life, Resurrection. His death is the cause of new life. He yielded himself to the Father’s will. He allowed himself to be betrayed, denied, tortured, ridiculed, scourged, crowned, nailed and pierced. He was obedient to death and because of this, God greatly exalted him. This is the heart of our doctrine: Jesus' death merits the Resurrection, both His and ours

Only a life spent for others will be glorified: The history always remembers and celebrates people and leaders who were totally selfless, giving their best to God and their fellow human beings. They are selfless people who believe in a cause greater than themselves. All of us do some work in the society as teachers, doctors, nurses, cleaners, gardeners, mechanics, pilots, drivers, policemen, firefighters and so on. We can always make a difference in our work if we are godly people with the sense of love and sacrifice for our brothers and sisters. Let us never forget, “Only a life, spent for others, will be remembered by God and that will be the only criterion for our glorification in heaven”.

Be a candle and salt: We enjoy the Olympic Games. The young athletes in order to stand on the winner’s platform make lot of sacrifices and hard work. Parents make lot of sacrifices for the betterment of their children. A pregnant mother sacrifices all her physical needs like hunger and sleep just for the sake of the child in her womb. In every success, there is an element of sacrifice. Salt loses its essence in order to give taste. A candle loses its wax in order to give light. As disciples of our Lord Jesus, we should be always willing to deny ourselves in order to bring light and life.

Concluding Prayer: Lord of the Holy Sacrifice, your sacrifice on the cross has given us new life. May we always recall your holy sacrifice on the cross and do it in remembrance of you. When tempted by selfishness, inspire us to be taken as an unworthy sacrifice. When burdened by envy, let us become an instrument of blessing for others. When afflicted by anger and pride, grant us the humility to be broken and given for others. When unsettled by anguish and troubled by worries, give us encouragement. Teach our mind and direct our will to humbly endure the pain of undeserved suffering even when our intent was good and done what is right. May we understand that it is in the holy sacrifice of your wounds that our brokenness is healed. May we see in your sacrifice on the cross not only death and defeat but victory and life. With Blessed Mother of Jesus, who joined her heart with the sacrifice of her Son, may we become a holy sacrifice of love and service for others. Gathered around the altar of love, may all be united in listening to your word and sharing the one bread and cup and become one people, offering one holy sacrifice. (Hail Mary/ Blessing)