

## **Fifth Sunday of Lent B/2018**

The readings of this fifth Sunday of Lent talk about the transformation of the people of God. They show how God is willing to transform his people by making a new Covenant with them. They invite us to let God make us new creatures by receiving his redemption.

The first reading of the book of Jeremiah describes the new Covenant that God intends to make with the house of Israel. It shows the reason why he wants a new Covenant with them and what he will do in order to show that he is their God and they are his people. Finally, the text shows the consequence of that renewal of Israel, as all the people will know God while he will forgive them and no more remember their sins.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is merciful and forgiving of the sins of his people. Another idea is the truth that God is capable of transforming people by renewing his Covenant with them. The last idea is related to the truth that the knowledge of God increases with the sanctity of his people.

This text allows us to better understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus speaks of his imminent death. The Gospel starts with the mention of some Greeks who were at the feast in Jerusalem and who expressed to one of Jesus' disciples their intention to see him.

Then, it speaks of the reaction of Jesus when the news came to him. It states in particular his speech in which he acknowledged that his time has come to be glorified. After that, the Gospel focuses on Jesus' statement that says that unless a grain of wheat falls in the ground and dies, it cannot bear fruit. Then, it highlights another of his declarations that says that whoever loves his life in this world will lose it, while the one who hates his life will preserve it for eternal life.

The Gospel finishes with Jesus' declaration over his anguish about what was lying ahead of him, while a voice from heaven assured him about the glory awaiting him. Finally, the Gospel reports the words of Jesus about the judgment of the world and the assurance that when he will die, he will draw everybody to him.

What do we learn from today's readings? Today I want to talk about the time for decision for our salvation. What do I mean by that? Let me explain. In fact, there are moments in the life of each one of us when we feel that we have to stand up, take on responsibility, and make a decision for our life and our future.

In such moments people feel that their time has come, that hesitation is not permitted anymore, and that they have to do what they have to do whatever might be the consequences of their decision. In such moments, too, people rise above the circumstances of life, be they favorable or not. It is in such a situation that people often say, "This is our time, this is our moment".

It is such a situation we find in today's Gospel for the Greeks and for Jesus as well. In fact, the Greeks, who normally were pagans and not Jews by birth, have come to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover. They were certainly led in their approach by the search for the truth and, perhaps, by the fame of Jesus.

Once in Jerusalem, they felt that something was in the air, that they could not let such an opportunity pass away without taking advantage of it by inquiring about Jesus. In that

sense, they felt that their time had come and they could no longer wait without seeing Jesus.

Their approach teaches us what we already know by human experience, namely that life is full of opportunities. However, if we miss an opportunity today, we are not always assured to have it again tomorrow, because the circumstances might be different and not the same.

Therefore, it is good to take advantage of any grace that God gives and make peace with him, with ourselves and with our fellows. Of course, no decision is easy, because it requires that we get out of our comfort zone and we accept to die a little bit to ourselves. And yet, that is what we have to do.

That is why Jesus says that unless the grain of wheat dies, it cannot produce fruit. If we dwell in our habits and do not want to change, we will never make it. As Jesus says again, whoever loves his life in this world will lose it and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life.

I believe that it is for that reason that Jesus himself made the decision to assume his destiny until the end. For him, too, the time has come to be glorified, but it is a glory he has to receive through the acceptance of the cross.

In that sense, the passion and death of Jesus are means by which the Father will glorify him. As human experience has shown, it is always because men and women have accepted to die that great things have lived.

Think, for instance, of Martin Luther King and the bill on civil rights; think of President Lincoln and the emancipation of the slaves. If they did not accept sufferings and sacrifice, nothing would have happened. Thus, their sacrifice was worthwhile, because it has allowed the country to be what it is today.

In the same way, Jesus will accept to sacrifice his own life for our sake. He will die for us. In his death is our salvation, because by accepting the cross for us, he opened for us the doors of the kingdom of God. In turn, we have to accept to choose Jesus so that we may share in his glory.

That is why Jesus is talking about the judgment to come for the world. In that sense, we are put in a position of choosing him or not. If we choose him, we will live; if we do not choose, we will lose our eternal life. Let us pray that during this time of Lent God may help us to make a firm decision for his kingdom and leave the past behind us. May God bless you all!

**Jeremiah 31: 31-34; Hebrews 5: 7-9; John 12: 20-33**

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