

### John 12:20-33

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. These approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put this request to him, 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus.' Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together went to tell Jesus. Jesus replied to them: *'Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life. If a man serves me, he must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him. Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name!'* A voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' People standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder; others said, 'It was an angel speaking to him.' Jesus answered, *'It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours. Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the prince of this world is to be overthrown. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself.'* By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die.

The gospel for today draws us closer to our destination. Christ himself tells us: Now the hour has come for the son of man to be glorified. What glory is there in suffering? Jesus saw beyond the clouds of pain and difficulties in order to attain eternal life for each one of us. He knew that his suffering and death would restore life for all. So, rather than be discouraged by the temporary situation of suffering, he was encouraged and motivated by the honest reward of eternal life. Christ says: 'Unless a grain of wheat dies it remains a single grain, but if it dies it yields a rich harvest'. Unfortunately, many of us do not want to follow or like this pain and suffering. Jesus invites us to follow him along the path of life. He wants us to be where he is. He will be our strength and guide. We are asked to be ready to endure as he did and to die. As a grain of wheat dies in order to regenerate so we too will be regenerated in and with Christ. How willing am I to stand up for justice and for truth? Can I say no to sin, corruption and dishonesty?

## Fifth Sunday of Lent

Year B

17<sup>th</sup> March 2024



As our Lenten journey brings us ever nearer to Jerusalem, today's readings promise us the hope of forgiveness and eternal life as we continue to walk with Jesus in his suffering. No matter how the people of Israel have behaved in the past, God's new covenant which is written on their hearts, will overlook all their sins. Now they will know their merciful God as he truly is.

Psalm 50 invites us to bring all our guilt in trust, to our compassionate God, so that he will utterly blot out our sins.

The Second Reading recalls the lonely suffering of Jesus as he prayed in Gethsemane. But even here, Jesus is deeply humble and obedient, trusting that the Father is working through him, making him the source of salvation for all who love him.

In the Gospel, Jesus describes the grain of wheat that dies and is buried before it bears fruit. In the same way, Jesus himself will die and rise again, drawing all of us to himself. Like Jesus, we, too, are made for eternal life, and are united with him as we serve him.

This week, let us ask the Lord for strength, as we endeavour to follow him in love and obedience.

### Opening Prayer

*By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed himself over to death.*

### **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel (and the House of Judah), but not a covenant like the one I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant of mine, so I had to show them who was master. It is the Lord who speaks. No, this is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel when those days arrive – it is the Lord who speaks. Deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people. There will be no further need for neighbour to try to teach neighbour, or brother to say to brother, ‘Learn to know the Lord!’ No, they will all know me, the least no less than the greatest – it is the Lord who speaks – since I will forgive their iniquity and never call their sin to mind.

Today’s first reading is an assurance of God’s continuous presence with us. It also reminds us of the new thing that God is about to do in our midst: *I will make a new covenant and never call their sin to mind... then, I will be their God and they will be my people.* God is ready to set aside a relationship that was destroyed by infidelity. He wishes to restore a broken relationship. On our own part, we are invited to be ready to accept this new covenant with God. This new covenant offers us salvation and life. So, as we continue our Lenten journey, we are aware that God is willing to fulfil his promise and nothing can stop him. All he asks from each one of us is that we open and ready to accept this new covenant of love and reconciliation. How open and ready am I to receive this covenant of love?

### **Psalms 50(51):3-4,12-15**

*Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness. In your compassion blot out my offence. O wash me more and more from my guilt and cleanse me from my sin.*

*A pure heart create for me, O God, put a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, nor deprive me of your holy spirit.*

*Give me again the joy of your help; with a spirit of fervour sustain me, that I may teach transgressors your ways and sinners may return to you.*

### **Hebrews 5:7-9**

During his life on earth, Christ offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him out of death, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard. Although he was Son, he learnt to obey through suffering; but having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation.

Today’s second reading reminds us of the Gethsemane experience of Jesus. It reminds us of the great sacrifice of Christ. Firstly, this was in order to fulfil the promise of his Father. Secondly, it was in order to save us. *He learnt to obey through suffering... he became for all who obey him the source of eternal life.*

Christ is willing to undergo pain and suffering so that we may have life. This is made possible through his prayer and suffering for humanity. This he endures and embraces in humility and obedience; a humility and obedience we are asked to embrace as we live our daily lives. How willing am I to embrace this unconditional love of Christ?

**Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!**

*Whoever serves me must follow me, says the Lord;  
and where I am, there also will my servant be.*

**Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!**

*(Gospel overleaf)*

### **Prayer over the Offerings**

*Hear us, almighty God, and, having instilled in your servants the teachings of the Christian faith, graciously purify them by the working of this sacrifice.*

### **Prayer after Communion**

*We pray, almighty God, that we may always be counted among the members of Christ, in whose Body and Blood we have communion.*