



Christ in Our Neighborhood

Prayer

Father, help us to be like Christ Your Son, who loved the world and died for our salvation. Inspire us by His love, guide us by His example who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

If we return to the example used last week of a marriage covenant based on love and honor, we can see that external words or actions in a relationship are not enough.

The sign of a wedding ring, public vows, even the words, "I love you," are not enough if love and honor are not heartfelt.

Jeremiah certainly understood God's message when he prophesied that God would restore the broken marriage with his people. After their exile, God would bring his people back and make a new covenant.

The problem with the old covenant was that it was not heartfelt. External sacrifices and public worship were not enough. No longer written on stone tablets - as in the days of Moses - the New Covenant would include the law of love written on the hearts of all.

Jeremiah promises reconciliation with God. The promise is that Israel's Covenantal-Spouse (God) has asked those in exile to return:

"I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Question

Do you recall what was required of you when you needed to be reconciled with someone?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Hebrews 5:7-9

It is often said, "If you want to get something done right, you have to do it yourself."

This was certainly in the mind of God when the Lord became one with us to save us from a life of exile.

On our hearts was written the law. However, we preferred the external actions rather than the interior heartfelt honor and love for God. As much as we tried, we just couldn't get it right.

5th Sunday of Lent

Thanks be to God - as St. Paul reminds us - when Christ Jesus was in the flesh, He offered prayers and supplications (with tears) to God for our sake.

"If you want to do something right, you have to do it yourself," says God. His perfect, heartfelt sacrifice of prayers and even His very life "became the source of eternal salvation for those who obey him."

His perfect life-giving prayer is our eternal salvation. However, we ourselves are called to obey Him, the source of our salvation. We do this, as we offer our prayers to the Father, in union with His Son.

Those in RCIA preparing for Baptism are officially presented this week. May this prayer, united with Christ's supplication, be heartfelt for all who say it.

Question

What is your favorite prayer? Why?

This Weekend

The RCIA Readings follow the A Year Cycle.

A-Cycle commentaries available here:
dphx.org/Christ-in-our-neighborhood

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Commentary

Gospel: John 12:20-33

Now is the hour!

The Gospel of John reminds us that Jesus is fully in charge of what is to come in His passion, death, and resurrection. He is the pre-existent Word of God who knows the time when all things come to completion.

The covenants of old are now gathered together in Jesus Christ. There will be no need for future covenants. There will be no need for future signs - rainbows (Noah), stars (Abraham), or stone tablets (Moses). The time for the New Covenant is at hand.

Jesus sees the visit of the Greeks who wish to speak with Him as the sign that the appointed time is here. The Good News of salvation is to be shared with the Jews (chosen people of the Law) and Gentiles (Greeks).

Jesus says, "I will draw everyone to myself." The New Covenant is for all. But, the cost of this Covenant will be great! Jesus, the grain of wheat, must die in order to produce a great harvest!

"I am troubled now," says Jesus, (He knows of His death), "Yet, what should I say? Save me from this hour? But, it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name."

In this Season of Lent, now is the hour for us to give thanks to Christ for bringing to completion the Covenant for our sake. His death is our life!

Question

How will you give thanks to Jesus this week for being the grain of wheat who died for you?

This Week's Task

Say a prayer for those who are getting ready to come to the altar for the first time to receive Jesus, the Bread of Life.

Prayer

The leader invites each member to pass around a wheat stem. Holding the stem, they offer a prayer of gratitude (for health, family, etc). Then, each will say the following:

Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat.

The group will respond each time:

If it dies,
it produces a great harvest!

The leader will then guide the group in praying Psalm 51.

Psalm

Response: 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.

Conclude with an OUR FATHER