

5th Sunday in Lent



It is through dying we enter eternal life

As we are coming towards the end of our 2024 Lenten journey, today's Gospel passage, about a grain of wheat has to die in order to bear fruit, reminds us that we too have to die to self in order to live more fully as people and children of God. This dying to self is a gradual process and happens in a very ordinary way.

Christ who died for us, gives us that courage and strength.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, as we continue our Lenten journey in 2024, we gather together as living stones, part of your Church, we ask the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts, kindling in them the fire of your love.

Almighty God, speak to us through your Holy Spirit, and as we walk in the light of your Spirit may we grow in wisdom, always rejoicing in the comfort He brings, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Back to our Gospel reading for today.

Have you noticed throughout the public ministry of Jesus, as recorded in the John's Gospel of, there is a sort of tension created, for us the readers, as Jesus continually announces that his hour 'has not yet come'.

For example we note that in:

- John 2:5, Jesus gently rebukes his mother at Cana by telling her his hour had not yet come.
- Then in John 7:6-8, Jesus rebukes his brothers who want him to go up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles.
- And in John (7:30; 8:20) at the Feast of Tabernacles. his opponents try to take him by force on two occasions, but he escapes, because his our has not yet come.

Jesus' life is moving forward, towards a moment in time, an 'hour' decided by his father, which 'has not yet come'.

We the reader, wait for the coming of that hour.

Then, in today's Gospel verse 23, Jesus proclaims, for the first time in the story, that hour has come.

²³Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified'.

The setting is in Jerusalem and the Jewish feast of the Passover. However, in this sacred place and time (12:20-21), John tells us, some people from outside Jerusalem, and from outside Judaism, Greeks, announce *'we should like to see Jesus'*.

This desire has also been prepared for in earlier parts of the Gospel (refer to 10;15-16) where Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd, and that he was to lay down his life for his sheep, and that there were sheep not of the fold of Israel who would hear his voice so that there could be one flock, one shepherd.

John (11.52) tells us, Caiaphas told the people that one man must die for the nation, and added; *'And not only for the nation, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad'*.

These prophecies are about to be fulfilled as the wider world wishes to 'see Jesus' (12.21). He can now announce that his hour has come. He will be 'lifted up from the earth' and thus draw all to himself (v23).

The hour of Jesus is intimately associated with his death. The death of Jesus on the Cross is the place where Christ is 'lifted up', both physically by being raised off the ground on a stake, and spiritually, lifted up in exaltation, showing us how much God loves us. We gaze upon Jesus lifted up, loving God and showing God's love for us.

But the Cross is also the model for Jesus' disciples. As Jesus' death bore much fruit, we are invited to join him in a similar self-sacrificing love.

These famous words about the need for a seed to fall into the ground and die so that it might bear much fruit (v24) applies to both the fruitful life and death of Jesus and to the multitude of possibilities for the lives of those who claim to be his followers.

Our Eucharistic celebration proves that Jesus' 'lifting up' and falling into the ground in death has gathered the nations scattered across our world.

As we continue to proclaim His word and share in his broken body and spilt blood in memory of Him, Jesus' promise rings true.

Our desire to 'bear much fruit' can only become a reality if, in our own way, we follow the way of Jesus.

Wherever Jesus is, there His servant will also be (v26)

Christians often make the mistake that it is only Jesus, who, like the grain of wheat, falls into the ground and dies so that he might bear much fruit.

It is as much a challenge for us to respond to the way of Jesus as generously as Jesus responded to the will of his Father. In this way will we play our part in gathering the children of God, who are still so scattered.

May I leave you with this reflection that each of us is like a grain of wheat planted by God.

Just as a grain of wheat must die, so as to produce a harvest, so we must die to self in order to bear the fruits of love.

This dying to self is a gradual process & happens in little ways.

- Every act of humility involves a dying to pride.
- Every act of courage involves dying to cowardice.
- Every act of kindness involves dying to cruelty.
- Every act of love involves dying to selfishness.

Thus, the false self, dies, and the true self, made in God's image, is born and nurtured.

As the prayer of St Francis teaches us:

- It is by giving that we receive;
- It is by forgiving, that we are forgiven;
- It is by dying that we are born to eternal life. **Amen!**