

HOMILY LENT SUNDAY 05 - B

“Dying To Live”

(Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ps 51; Hebrew 5:7-9; John 12:20-23)

“Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

Those famous words ring through the years as a clarion call from Jack Kennedy, past president of the United States, words that helped him win the election that year, words that help us grasp the message of the Word of God for this 5th Sunday of Lent.

To follow Jesus, be prepared to die in order to live.

The Greeks were seekers of truth - here in the gospel they symbolize all those who seek truth, as well as the presence of “THE truth.” They are the vanguard of all those who will come to Jesus in faith. *The Hour* is that which was announced at Cana, where Jesus transformed water into wine at his mother’s request. This is the last week of Jesus’ life. The *if it dies* of the gospel, is a big “if” - many people never let themselves experience this surrender.

I have glorified it - the Father’s voice is a divine ratification and sanction of Jesus’ death on the cross. The Father’s voice is also meant to strengthen Jesus for the cross. The Father’s voice is heard three times in the New Testament: at the baptism of Jesus; at the Transfiguration, and here – all three incidents linked with his death on the Cross.

Lifted up refers both to the cross, and the ascension. When he is raised in glory, Jesus will send his Spirit who will spread his reign throughout the earth. The Passion, because of the Resurrection and what that means for humanity, is already the *glorification* of Jesus.

Son of Man was based on a description in the book of Daniel of a leader who would replace the cruel worldly powers and establish a Golden Age of peace and prosperity. To the Jews, the Son of Man came to mean an undefeatable world conqueror sent by God who would establish them as a ruling nation. *Glorified* for them meant power, but for Jesus it meant the victory of the Cross.

The lesson of the cross is a mysterious truth we are called to live out - that life comes from death; from spending one’s life, and from serving. Be prepared to die in order to live.

Nature itself serves as an example. Everything that dies in the fall returns in the spring bursting with life. And in the spring a simple seed, falling to the ground, is buried, rots and is transformed into a plant that bears fruit.

Think of your dark moments in the soil of your life. Sr. Rhea shared her burnout with a group. While teaching in the schools, she needed to be needed and volunteered for everything so she would feel good about herself, until she wore herself out and fell into a deep depression. At height of her depression, she could not work and was on sleeping pills which didn't help. She just couldn't do anything – she wanted a truck to run over her and end it all. She was totally ashamed of herself when told to see a psychiatrist. A spark of hope came before flying to Winnipeg. The small plane was icing up, and she was afraid of crashing, of dying. She realized that she wanted to live after all.

Her counsellor in Winnipeg, who was also a friend, started by asking her, “Who are you.” to which she replied, “I don't know.” So they started with the Myers Briggs sessions, and she started to heal through a combination of faith, fellowship and self-awareness. Her love for self had to come from within, not from her own efforts. She started visiting hospitals, finding others who were depressed, and sharing her story. That gave them hope and new life and meaning for herself. Now she is grateful for that moment of death, and realizes that God was preparing her for the final physical death, little by little. So, she concluded, be prepared to die, in order to live.

The Eucharist we celebrate is a mini Paschal mystery. The death of the grains of wheat and the grapes that make up the bread and wine that we share today makes present to us the love of Christ shown through the selfless sacrifice of his life on the cross. It is our invitation to die to ourselves, so as to live for others, and thus share in the very life of Christ.

So, as a follower of Jesus, be prepared to die in order to live.