

## Sunday of week 5 of Lent - Readings

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

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We are just one week away from Holy Week and our celebration of God's love for us in his passion, death and resurrection. Today we look at the meaning of what Jesus did for us. Some Greeks, probably converts to Judaism, approach Philip (whose name is Greek), saying: "We want to see Jesus." Philip tells Andrew (another Greek name) and they both go with the request to Jesus. We are not told if those men ever did see Jesus but we do know what seems at first sight the rather strange answer that Jesus gave to his disciples: "Unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest." The grain, of course, does not actually die but is totally transformed into something completely new: roots, leaves and fruit. Similarly the caterpillar lets go of being a caterpillar to become transformed into something altogether different and often much more beautiful - a moth or butterfly.

### *Seeing Jesus*

To SEE Jesus is not just to look at him, which is what those Greeks presumably wanted. (It is similar to the curiosity of the tax collector Zacchaeus who climbed a sycamore tree to get a better look at Jesus as he passed by underneath.) To SEE Jesus is to enter totally into his way of thinking, to understand WHY he had to suffer and die and rise again. Like the grain of wheat, Jesus has to let go of everything, including his own life, in order to bring life to himself and many others. In the process, both he and we will be transformed. If we cannot see this as the core of Jesus' life, we have not really seen him. But Jesus goes further and says we must have the same way of thinking. "Anyone who clings to his life, will lose it (we think of someone like Howard Hughes, the billionaire who died a fear-filled, lonely recluse); the one who is willing to let go will find a much richer and enriching life." And, if we want to be close to Jesus, we have to walk his Way. "If a man serves me, is my disciple, he must follow me. Where I am, my servant will be there too." It means walking with Jesus and with Mary all the way to Calvary, wherever that happens to be for each of us.

### *Ready to let go and let*

**God** Are we ready for that? Are we afraid to let everything go? Is Jesus asking too much? Let us have no doubt, Jesus himself was afraid, deeply afraid. "Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: 'Father, save me from this hour?'" It is clear that that is the prayer Jesus would like to pray. The Letter to the Hebrews (Second Reading) puts it graphically: "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 from death..." Letting go did not come any more easily to Jesus than it does to us. But, after his prayer, when he sweat blood in fear and trembling, he was able to say, YES. "Although he was Son, he learnt to obey through suffering" and, as a result, "he became for all who submit themselves to him the source of life and salvation." As Jesus himself says at the end of today's gospel, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself." "Lifted up" refers both to the cross and to the glory of the Father where we are invited to follow. So let us today learn to SEE Jesus, the Jesus of the Gospel. The Jesus who let go of everything for us and who invites us to be with him all the way. Let us pray for his

courage and his trust in his Father, that the life and happiness and fulfilment we all long for is in that letting go and letting God.