

## MARCH 18, 2018

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Reading 1 [JER 31:31-34](#)

Responsorial Psalm [PS 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15.](#)

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R. (12a) Create a clean heart in me, O God.

Reading 2 [HEB 5:7-9](#)

Gospel [JN 12:20-33](#)

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Some Greeks who had come to worship at the Passover Feast came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me.

"I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." The crowd there heard it and said it was thunder; but others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come for my sake but for yours. Now is the time of judgment on this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." He said this indicating the kind of death he would die.

### HOMILY:

There once was a rich man who was near death. He was very grieved because he had worked so hard for his money and he wanted to be able to take it with him to heaven. So, he began to pray that he might be able to take some of his wealth with him. An angel heard his plea and appeared to him and said, "Sorry, but you can't take your wealth with you." The man implored the angel to speak to God to see if He might bend the rules. The man continued to pray that his wealth could follow him. The angel reappeared and informed the man that God had decided to allow him to take one suitcase with him. Overjoyed, the man found his largest suitcase and filled it with pure gold bars and placed it beside his bed, ready for the "hour of his death." When it arrived, he found himself at the Gates of Heaven, greeted by St. Peter. St. Peter, seeing the suitcase, said, "Hold on, you can't bring that in here!" But, the man explained to St. Peter that he had prior permission from God himself and asked him to verify his story with the Lord. Sure enough, St. Peter checked and came back, saying, "You're right. You are allowed one carry-in bag, but I'm supposed to check its contents before letting it through." St. Peter opened the suitcase to inspect the worldly items that the man found too precious to leave behind and, seeing the gold bars, exclaimed, "Of all you could have brought with you,

you brought pavement?" Oh, our fruitless efforts to carry with us what we think we need across the course of our lives, when the Lord is trying to give us what we really need—no suitcases needed!

It is indeed part of human nature to want more, to want it for as long as we can, and to try to collect up what we need—that is how we were created! But . . . as wisdom is gained, we discover this truth: that, try as we may, the things of this world simply cannot quench our wanting. Instead, what we really need, in the end, is not what we can collect, but what Jesus freely gives us. Truly, our hearts are restless until they rest in God.

In today's gospel, the Greeks who come to the disciples speak perfectly the truest, deepest longing of the human heart, when they say what they want: "We want to see Jesus." Jesus confirms this most essential truth of all of each of our longing hearts when he responds to them:

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, amen. I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life."

What each of our hearts need is Jesus' life, which, over these next two weeks, we will watch with faith, admiration, and gratitude, as he becomes that seed that dies on Good Friday and bursts to abundant life on Easter that we might have life. *That's what we need*—and that's what he gives: himself—the Seed sown into the ground after Calvary in perfect love that He might be lifted from the earth in the resurrection to produce much fruit for us. For, as Jesus continues, after his saving sacrifice, "when I am lifted up from the earth [that is, raised from the dead], I will draw everyone to myself."

And as the Mass our way to touch the saving death of Jesus, it is the place where we are drawn, according to Jesus' promise, to his glorified body and the life he offers. This is what we long for and what we need—the life of Jesus! Right here, the Grain of Wheat that fell to the earth rises glorified and becomes for us the satisfaction of the deepest longing of our constantly seeking hearts!

**Good news:** Our hearts want more, Jesus wants more for us too, and He knows what alone can satisfy: His very life, given to us each time we gather here. And at this heavenly banquet, nothing of this world can compare to the glory of the gift we here receive. This gift, the very Life of God, is what our hearts constantly crave. And with the richness that is this foretaste of the heavenly banquet, no suitcases required in this heavenly banquet. Our host and Lord provides all we need!