



Fifth Week of Lent

March 29 through April 4, 2009

Journeying Through Lent A Time to Encounter Jesus Through Other People

Use this resource alone or with others. Used with others, read the reflections aloud, pausing between them. Invite each member of the group to take a turn reading, or prepare readers in advance for larger groups. Share with each other your Lenten commitments and promises, keeping within the silence of your own heart those things which belong only there.

Opening Ritual and Prayer

Light a candle. Open your Bible and set it beside the lit candle. Prepare the room for prayer, even if you are alone. Quiet music can help to settle yourself and others after a hectic day.

Leader: Jesus, you are a light of revelation to the whole world.

All: Help us to reveal you to the world.

Leader: Jesus, you have died to self and are raised to God.

All: Help us to die to our selves so that one day we may also be raised to God.

Leader: Jesus, help us to pray even if we are troubled.

All: Amen

Read Aloud to yourself or have various members of the group read aloud the Scripture Readings for the Fifth Sunday of Lent (Year B):

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Hebrews 5:7-9

John 12:20-33

Reflection

In Lent we are called to encounter Jesus in others and help others see Jesus.

The Gospel reading for the fifth week of Lent is the conclusion of John's presentation of Jesus' public ministry and expands its goal beyond just Jews. The passage follows John's account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, when the Pharisees complain to one another that "the whole world has gone after him" (John 12:19). This observation is confirmed when some Greeks come to the house where Jesus is staying hoping to see him. Recall that John was writing for a predominantly Greek audience. The Gospel author's purpose was

to show that Jesus' mission extended beyond the Jews to the Gentile world, so it would have been logical for him to portray Gentiles (Greeks) inquiring to see Jesus.

The Greeks approach Philip who has already been told earlier in the Gospel by Jesus that he who sees Jesus sees the Father who sent him. The Greeks make a request of Philip: "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." (Recall that in the Gospel of John "seeing" Jesus is the path to salvation). Philip goes to Andrew, and Andrew goes to Jesus and Jesus goes to them. The point being that access to Jesus comes through others. Further, seeing Jesus is often manifested through the behavior of others. Even today, Jesus comes to us through others, through the lifelines we have with other members of the community.

The image used to describe Jesus' own destiny as well as ours, is the grain of wheat that must be buried in the earth and die. Otherwise it remains simply a grain of wheat. But if it dies, if it is buried in the soil, watered by time, weathered and nurtured by the hard work of humankind and God, it produces much fruit. Jesus is talking about his own death on the cross and burial. Contrary to external appearances, his death is life for all.

This reading is also about our own baptisms, when we died to all else but the power of God. Jesus is talking about the process of denying our very selves and picking up our crosses daily and bearing our share of the burden of the good news so that others may have life. In the Gospel of John following Jesus to the cross includes foot washing, a form of humble service, and it is there that Jesus is found.

Ask Yourself

During this Lent, to what situation, sin, or other dimension of yourself will you become more willing to "die"?

Notice that Jesus begins to pray aloud: "Father save me from this hour." It was for this hour that Jesus was born. It is the time for Jesus to embrace his destiny. We too are daily confronted with the hours of our lives. What was our worst or hardest hour? How did we get through it? What was the best hour? Who or what made it so great?

Jesus continues to pray with more intensity: "Father glorify your name!" In Jesus' life and death and our lives and deaths we discover the glorification and the true honoring of God. Our lives glorify God when we willingly give our lives for the sake of others as Jesus did. Suddenly, a voice is heard from the sky, as in Jesus' baptism, reassuring Jesus

that God is with him. The crowd hears the voice as thunder. How do we hear the voice of God? Do we pay attention to it or do we dismiss it as just thunder?






Jesus prays aloud: “I am troubled.” When Jesus is troubled he turns to his Father and prays. He doesn’t demand that God save him from trouble, instead he asks that all that he does will glorify God and focus others’ eyes on God. When we struggle with dying to self, we are in good company: Jesus himself was “troubled” by this. We should be troubled by the same things that Jesus is troubled about: injustice, deceit, greed, violence, lack of food, housing, medical care, clean water and hope for people. We should be troubled about rampant nationalism, racism, sexism. We should be troubled about human trafficking, gang initiations, drive by shootings. Being troubled as Jesus is troubled is part of our Lenten journey.

Ask Yourself

As Lent proceeds this year, about what in the culture or world around you are you troubled?

We are journeying in the company of Jesus and there are others trying to get to see Jesus through us, just as the Greeks came to Philip and then through Andrew onto Jesus. By baptism we have a lifeline to Jesus. Who needs to hold onto us so as to make it to see Jesus? Who needs our service now---in a nursing home, a soup kitchen, a single parent at your child’s school, a single mother with young children who would rejoice in a day off or even a few hours, a teenager who needs an adult tutor or mentor? Lent is a time for all of us to help others see Jesus.

Reflection Questions

-  What makes me want to see Jesus?
-  How do I see Jesus in the ways others live?
-  How do others see Jesus in my manner of living?
-  Do I resist dying to self?
-  When have I died to self?

Activities for the Fifth week of Lent

For Individuals

Lent is a good time to go to the sacrament of reconciliation. Plan this week to take advantage of this sacrament at your parish. Acknowledging our sinfulness and seeking God's forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation is an integral part of our Lenten journey.

For Children

If you have made your First Reconciliation and First Communion you may want to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation as part of your Lenten practice. You may want to invite your parents to go to church with you and to pray for you while you are with the priest and receiving the sacrament.

For Parishes

Assemble a group of volunteers to be lifelines to the people most in need. Have them visit or contact these people and in addition to being good listeners determine what assistance the parish can provide. Then follow through and provide it.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Jesus, you make all things new.

All: Allow a new spring-time to bud forth in us.

Leader: Jesus, we want to see you more clearly

All: Help us see you in ourselves and others

All: Amen

Exchange a greeting of peace with all who are present.