

## **Fifth Sunday of Lent (Passiontide begins). 25<sup>th</sup> March 2012 (8am)**

### **Jeremiah 31:31-34 A New Covenant**

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

### **Hebrews 5:5-10**

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

'You are my Son,

today I have begotten you';

as he says also in another place,

'You are a priest for ever,

according to the order of Melchizedek.'

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

### **John 12:20-33**

#### **Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus**

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish 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. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.'

#### **Jesus Speaks about His Death**

'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Our heart’s cry as we approach Easter?

Today, Passion Sunday, Passiontide starts – remembering Jesus suffering, his acceptance of the pain of our sins, of all that is needed to bring us to forgiveness.

Today is also the Annunciation (transferred to tomorrow for the clash of dates) – the angel coming to Mary with the promise that she would bear the Messiah. And the willingness that this required of her, to bear the disgrace of being pregnant out of marriage, her reputation gone, the cost of the displacement which it brought, being a refugee fleeing persecution, the agony of Jesus crucifixion, the sword piercing her own soul.

What gave her the strength?

What gave Jesus the strength to go through with all the opposition he received, up to submitting without protest to the fabricated judgments to get rid of him, because what he said was too close to the bone?

Two things stand out in the other readings. Hebrews – he learned obedience through the things he suffered. He found that tough though it was, heart obedience to God is the way to wholeness and peace.

And the Lord’s promise in Jeremiah. The new covenant God will make with us is to write his laws on our hearts so that we will obey them rather than run in the opposite direction.

This is God’s love in action to us. Not to tell us what to do, but to work on our wills – what the heart represented in Hebrew thinking – so that we grow in desiring his will and his ways.

Like Jesus who learned obedience through the things he suffered, we may find it’s the tough and painful places in life that lead us to turn to God, to seek his way out of the pain, grief and messes of life. So often he doesn’t take us out of the messes, but leads us through them, and in doing so transforms our hearts and minds to understand and desire his will, and thereby grow to flow naturally in obedience to the blessings of his will for us. What joy!

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

What's your heart's cry, the deepest desire within you to see Jesus in a new and meaningful way this year as we approach Holy Week and Easter?

Without the Cross there is no Crown, without death there is no resurrection. Perhaps some part of us needs to be like the seed Jesus talked about, falling into the ground and dying, like he did, to bear much fruit.

As we start Passiontide, the season of The Passion, let's not be afraid of facing the pain, of making the journey of Holy Week and thereby finding a new answer to the desire, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."