

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT - B

Last Sunday Jesus said that the Son of Man must be lifted up.

Today he tells us that when he is lifted up, he will draw all people to himself.

This is the goal of our Lenten journey and our baptismal call: to be drawn by the Spirit into a deeper relationship with Christ.

Believing in the immensity of God's love for us revealed in Jesus, we seek - by God's grace - to become more like Jesus.

In the words of today's Gospel, that means we must become like a grain of wheat which dies in order to produce abundant fruit.

How do we die? By living for God and for others rather than just for ourselves ...

... and by dying to our self-centeredness and self-sufficiency.

We can be so afraid of what we might lose that we cling to our agenda, our priorities, and our possessions with a death grip ... literally, since it leads to the death of our soul.

Those who are fully alive give and give and give.

Jesus never clung to what was his own.

His becoming human was the divine kenosis - the self-emptying - by which Jesus gave us everything, his very life.

He shared fully in our human nature so that, in the weakness of our flesh, he might be obedient through suffering, even unto death.

Like the grain of wheat he died, was buried, and rose to new life to become the source of salvation for all who obey him.

Today Jesus tells us, "Where I am, my servant must be."

Do I live like Jesus, as a servant of others?

Am I willing to be obedient to God even when it leads to suffering?

Our Lenten sacrifices represent our desire to say "no" to our self-centeredness in order to say "yes" to God?

All throughout this Lent we have heard about the covenants God made with his humanity.

In the first reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah God declares that he is going to make a new covenant with his people and that it will be written upon their hearts.

This new covenant requires more than external conformity; it calls for interior commitment and transformation.

It is not simply a story to be learned or even to be believed.

The new covenant is a relationship with Christ and a way of life following his example of total self-gift poured out in the Paschal Mystery.

If we want to see Jesus - like those Greeks who came to Philip at the beginning of the gospel - we have to remain with Jesus through his passion and death which lead to the glory of his resurrection.

At the beginning of Lent I spoke about the need to reflect upon the state of our relationship with Jesus as his disciples.

Now that we are reaching the end of our Lenten journey, we are encouraged to examine our conscience and to respond to the call to reconciliation.

Have I clung to my life holding on to it just for myself rather than spending it for God and for others?

Have I sought to escape the Cross instead of embracing its demands, trusting in the God who loves me and saves me?

This week we are being offered the opportunity to be reconciled to God through the Sacrament of Penance.

On Thursday evening we will begin hearing confessions at 7pm.

Please take advantage of the presence of many priests who will be hearing confessions.

Jesus desires to draw each of us to himself.

Let us die to selfishness so that we can be drawn more and more into his life, producing abundant fruit.