



AMDG  
5TH SUNDAY IN LENT  
YEAR B  
18TH MARCH 2018



**‘If anyone serves me, they must follow me’**

OPENING PRAYER

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God,  
may we walk eagerly in that same charity  
with which, out of love for the world,  
your Son handed himself over to death.

As our Lenten journey brings us ever nearer to Jerusalem, this week’s readings promise us the hope of forgiveness and eternal life as we try to stay alongside Jesus in his suffering.

However the people of Israel have behaved in the past, God’s new covenant, written on their hearts, will overlook all their sins. They will now know their merciful God as he truly is (*First Reading*).

The *Psalm* invites us to bring all our guilt to our compassionate God, in trust that he will utterly blot out our sins. We rejoice to know that God will renew our hearts and keep us steadfast.

The *Second Reading* recalls the lonely suffering of Jesus as he might have prayed in Gethsemane. But even here, Jesus is deeply humble and obedient, trusting that the Father is working through him, making him the source of salvation for all who love him.

In the *Gospel*, Jesus describes the grain of wheat that dies and is buried before it bears fruit. In the same way, Jesus himself will die and rise again, drawing all of us to him. Like Jesus, we, too, are made for eternal life, and are united with him as we serve him.

This week, let us ask the Lord for strength as we try to follow him in love and obedience. We pray that he will keep us safely by his side even when our own path leads us to share in his suffering.

## SECOND READING HEBREWS 5: 7–9

**D**uring his life on earth, Jesus offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him out of death, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard. Although he was Son, he learnt to obey through suffering; but having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation.

I come to inner quiet in a way that feels comfortable for me.

How am I today?

Do I find it easy to settle, or am I distracted?

However I feel, I can trust that the Lord looks on me with infinite love.

When I am ready, I read this short passage slowly, reverently.

The writer of the letter is showing us Jesus at prayer, as he might have prayed in Gethsemane.

Perhaps I imagine myself kneeling alongside Jesus in silence, conscious of his presence.

How might he be feeling? ...And how do I feel?

I share with him openly whatever comes to mind.

Jesus seems to grow through his suffering – and also grow in utter trust.

Perhaps I am reminded of a painful time in my own life, or when someone dear to me has suffered deeply.

Have I found inner strength to trust in God at such times, or has he seemed far away?

I speak of this to the Lord from my heart, as I would to a dear friend, taking care not to judge myself.

I allow the Lord time to respond.

The writer speaks twice in this passage of 'obeying'. I notice what this word stirs in me ... cooperation ...? negativity ...? courage ... ? or ...?

I ponder what 'learning to obey' God means in my own life, whether in times of suffering, or of joy.

How am I drawn to respond to this invitation to obedience? I ask the Holy Spirit to show me, and pray that I might be strengthened to do God's will.

Before I end my prayer, I take time to bring before the Lord all those who feel alone in their suffering, and all facing hard choices.

I finish with a slow sign of the cross, asking the Lord to keep me in his loving gaze this day.

## GOSPEL: JOHN 12: 20–33 (part)

**A**mong those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. These approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put this request to him, ‘Sir, we should like to see Jesus’. Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together went to tell Jesus. Jesus replied to them: ‘Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life. If anyone serves me, they must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour them.

As I come to prayer, I ask the Lord to help me be aware of his welcoming presence, and to offer anything that burdens me into his hands.

In time, I read through the Gospel text prayerfully.

I may like to place myself within the scene, sensing the hustle and bustle of Passover, the different nationalities and languages ... Jesus and his disciples nearby.

I stay here for a while, noticing what stirs for me.

Perhaps I stand with the Greeks, sensing their eagerness to meet Jesus.

Who is the Jesus that I would like to encounter?

Is there something I would like to say to him?

I take time to do that now, trusting that he listens to me with the greatest love and compassion.

Is there anyone in my life who might be asking *me* to introduce them to Jesus?

I ask the Lord to show me.

Jesus is clear about the challenges of life in his service – and also clear about the promised reward. I ponder the ways in which Jesus himself comes to us as a loving servant.

How does it feel as he invites me to work alongside him, as servants together?

Where might he be calling me to follow him this day, this week?

I ask for any grace that I need, and the courage to respond with an open and generous heart.

In time I end my prayer, giving thanks for all that the Lord has done for me.

*Our Father ...*

## Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

I will be [your] God and [you] shall be my people. *First Reading*

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness. *Psalms*

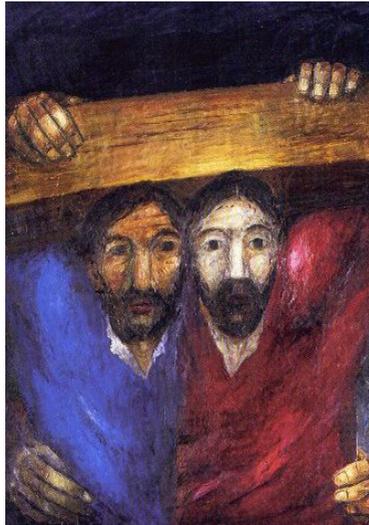
How infinitely rich he is in grace. *Second Reading*

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. *Gospel*

'We should like to see Jesus.' *Gospel*

*This week's texts if you want to reflect further  
Jeremiah 31: 31–34; Psalm 50 (51); Hebrews 5: 7–9; John 2: 20–33*

Sieger Köder,  
*Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his cross*



**'Wherever  
I am,  
my servant  
will be  
there too'**



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**JESUIT**  
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