

5th Sunday of Lent B

*If a man serves me, he must follow me,
wherever I am, my servant will be there too.
(Jn 12:26)*



First Reading

Jeremiah 31:31-34

See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel (and the House of Judah), but not a covenant like the one I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant of mine, so I had to show them who was master. It is the Lord who speaks. No, this is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel when those days arrive – it is the Lord who speaks. Deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people. There will be no further need for neighbour to try to teach neighbour, or brother to say to brother, "Learn to know the Lord!" No, they will all know me, the least no less than the greatest – it is the Lord who speaks – since I will forgive their iniquity and never call their sin to mind.

Second Reading

Hebrews 5:7-9

During his life on earth, Christ 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.

Among 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 a man serves me, he must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him. Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"

A voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

People standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder; others said, "It was an angel speaking to him." Jesus answered, "It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours. Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the prince of this world is to be overthrown. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself."

By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die.

Meditation

"The whole world has run after him!" observe the Pharisees bitterly after Jesus' entry into Jerusalem: On the eve of the last week of his life, the fourth gospel brings to a close the Book of Signs and opens the Book of Glory. Just as the arrival of the first disciples on the banks of the Jordan heralds the beginning of Jesus' signs, so the arrival of Greek disciples heralds the beginning of his glory. Far from being incidental extras, these foreigners signal the arrival of a significant moment. The "Hour" has come when Jesus, lifted up from the earth and glorified, will draw all people to himself. It is an hour of paradox, when all realities change meaning: to die is to live and to lose is to find. In order to bear fruit, the grain must decompose in the earth. From such a death will come the procession of nations foretold in Scripture for the last days: they will lift up their eyes to the tree of life.

"We should like to see Jesus!" Who today will enable us to "see" Jesus and to discover, in his death, the first-fruits of glorification? Who are the disciples who will serve as our intermediaries so that we can recognize the Son of Man? Will the "Greeks" of our time – all those loyal people who seek a meaning for their lives – find around them friends of Jesus to take them into his presence?