

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 12:26

Whoever serves me must follow me, says the Lord;
and where I am, there also will my servant
be.

Gospel

John 12:20-33; L35B

Some Greeks who had come to
worship at the Passover Feast
came to Philip, who was from
Bethsaida in Galilee,
and asked him, "Sir, we would like
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.
Amen, amen, I say to you,
unless a grain of wheat falls to the
ground and dies,
it remains just a grain of wheat;
but if it dies, it produces much fruit.

Whoever loves his life loses it,
and whoever hates his life in this world
will preserve it for eternal life.

Whoever serves me must follow me,
and where I am, there also will my
servant be.

The Father will honor whoever serves
me.

"I am troubled now. Yet what should I
say?"

"Father, save me from this hour?"
But it was for this purpose that I came to
this hour.

Father, glorify your name."

Then a voice came from heaven,

"I have glorified it and will glorify it
again."

Continued in Appendix A, p. 273.

*Year A readings may be used, see Appendix A,
pp. 273-275.*

Reflecting on the Gospel

The gospel of this Sunday proclaims the paradoxical wisdom of emptying in order to become full, of dying so that we may be raised to new life. This is the "hour" of radical obedience and exaltation for which, from Cana, through controversies, festivals, and miraculous signs, Jesus has been waiting: an hour that in today's gospel sees Jesus sought by new "first disciples," those beyond Israel,

to whom the evangelist refers as "[s]ome Greeks." They were probably Greek-speaking Jews who had come up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. They approach Andrew and Philip, two of Jesus's original disciples who are apparently approachable and good at bringing others to Jesus. (Remember Peter, Nathanael, and the boy with five barley loaves and two fish.) Although these seekers may have been Jews from far-flung places, John uses this episode on the threshold of Jesus's "hour" to suggest the call of the Gentiles. Many nations who eagerly seek Jesus will be drawn into his mystery when he is lifted up from the earth on a cross; all those who will belong to the church that is meant to be multiracial and multicultural.

To explain the meaning of his "hour," Jesus tells the parable of a grain of wheat. When it is dropped into the earth, the seed shrinks, empties itself, and dies. But in the warmth and moisture of the earth new life breaks out of the husk and bears much fruit. "Fruit" in John's gospel means

"life," and the hour is at hand when Jesus will be buried in the heart of the earth and rise from there to transformed and transforming life.

The larger world beyond Israel now includes us. If we wish not only to see but also to follow Jesus, we must choose to empty ourselves of self-centeredness, of the instinct for self-preservation at the expense of our sisters and brothers. Those insulated from others' suffering, eager for good connections, popularity, and status, rather than finding and following Jesus, will lose their lives. From seeds buried in the warm love and service of others, and watered by fidelity to our baptismal commitment, the Christian community grows into the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is not easy; it was painful for Jesus, and it is painful for us. Jesus's soul was troubled, we hear, but he embraces his hour of his own free will. He has already told the crowds, "No one takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father" (John 10:18; NABRE). What Jesus has done, he proclaims, has always been for the glory of his Father, and he will die because of the way he lived. The Father's voice affirms Jesus's proclamation, declaring that Jesus is giving glory to God, and will be glorified because of this. It is a voice, says Jesus, that speaks not so much to reassure Jesus himself, but to bring faith and encouragement to the bystanders.

We are now the crowd assembled around Jesus. Do we understand his words or the Father's voice? Can we recognize his saving cross at the epicenter of the tragedies that are born of sin, planted on the seismic fault lines that threaten to open and crack our world apart: the divides between rich and poor, peace and



Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, March 19, 2021

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29

R. (37) The son of David will live for ever.

The promises of the LORD I will sing forever,
through all generations my mouth will
proclaim your faithfulness,
For you have said, "My kindness is
established forever";
in heaven you have confirmed your
faithfulness.

R. The son of David will live for ever.

"I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant:
Forever will I confirm your posterity
and establish your throne for all
generations."

R. The son of David will live for ever.

"He shall say of me, 'You are my father,
my God, the Rock, my savior.'
Forever I will maintain my kindness toward
him,
and my covenant with him stands firm."

R. The son of David will live for ever.

SECOND READING

Rom 4:13, 16-18, 22

Brothers and sisters:

It was not through the law
that the promise was made to Abraham
and his descendants
that he would inherit the world,
but through the righteousness that comes
from faith.

For this reason, it depends on faith,
so that it may be a gift,

and the promise may be guaranteed to all
his descendants,
not to those who only adhere to the law
but to those who follow the faith of
Abraham,
who is the father of all of us, as it is
written,

I have made you father of many nations.

He is our father in the sight of God,
in whom he believed, who gives life to the
dead

and calls into being what does not exist.

He believed, hoping against hope,
that he would become *the father of many
nations,*

according to what was said, *Thus shall your
descendants be.*

That is why *it was credited to him as
righteousness.*

Fifth Sunday of Lent, March 21, 2021

Gospel (cont.)

John 12:20-33; L35B

The crowd there heard it and said it was thunder;
but others said, "An angel has spoken to him."

Jesus answered and said,

"This voice did not come for my sake but for yours.

Now is the time of judgment on this world;
now the ruler of this world will be driven out.

And when I am lifted up from the earth,

I will draw everyone to myself."

He said this indicating the kind of death he would die.

FIRST READING

Ezek 37:12-14

Thus says the Lord God:

O my people, I will open your graves
and have you rise from them,
and bring you back to the land of Israel.

Then you shall know that I am the LORD,
when I open your graves and have you rise
from them,

O my people!

I will put my spirit in you that you may live,
and I will settle you upon your land;
thus you shall know that I am the LORD.

I have promised, and I will do it, says the
LORD.