

5 Lent B 2018 SML  
JN 12:20-33

“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.” What does that mean?

Clearly Our Blessed Lord is speaking of Himself as the grain, Who is soon to die, unjustly sentenced to death for our sins. So the question, more specifically, is what is the fruit that He is talking about? What is the natural result of His death and resurrection?

The answer to that question is found in our first reading. The result that He is looking for, the result:

- ✓ of God becoming man,
- ✓ of suffering for our sins,
- ✓ of dying on the cross,
- ✓ and of rising from the dead,

is an interior transformation. More concretely, the fruit that should blossom in your life and in mine, as a result

- ✓ of God becoming man,
- ✓ of suffering for our sins,
- ✓ of dying on the cross,
- ✓ and of rising from the dead,

is:

- ✓ a new heart,
- ✓ a heart recreated by God,
- ✓ a heart that will keep God's law that is condensed into one law with two parts: love of God and love of neighbor,

not because it is imposed on us from the outside, but a heart that wants to keep His law from the inside.

What does this heart look like? What is the distinguishing characteristic of a heart recreated by God as a result of Jesus' Passion?

The distinguishing characteristic of this heart is simply **MERCY**.

"Do this in memory of Me." These are the words that Jesus spoke on Holy Thursday. These are the words that Jesus speaks at every Mass. "Do this in memory of Me."

I'm not saying these words. Dan Swift isn't saying these words. It is the concept, the belief, "alter Christus" (another Christ). It is "persona Christi" (in the person of Christ). If I were saying these words, I would say, "Do this in memory of Him." Rather, it is Jesus, using my voice, using my hands (and how humbling is it for any priest to realize that?) saying, "Do this in memory of me."

The new covenant that Jeremiah speaks of in this evening's (morning's) first reading has two senses. Often times we only think of one.

The first sense clearly has something to do with Jesus' command to the Apostles on Holy Thursday, at the Last Supper, to do this, "the blood of the new and eternal covenant," to continue this "new and eternal covenant," which we now do every day, in fact. Mass is offered every day of the year, except Good Friday. And clearly, not only from the Acts of the Apostles, but from all the documents we have regarding how the early Church lived, all Christians understood everywhere, that at the center of their life, is the Eucharist, the celebration of this great gift of what God has done for us and has given us, and since it is new and eternal, what God is doing for us and is giving us, when we come to Mass.

The second sense to this "new and eternal covenant" is what follows: "the new and eternal covenant, poured out for many, (here you go) for the forgiveness of sins."

Do this in memory of me? What exactly are we do to? We are to forgive. We are to show mercy, at home, and beyond. The fruit that Jesus wants to bring about in us as a result of His passion, the natural occurrence that is supposed to happen in

us, as a result of you and I feeding, week after week, on the Body and the Blood of Jesus, is the transformation of our lives, the transformation of our hearts, which more and more looks like His heart. And what are the words that flow from His heart and He is lifted high upon the Cross? “Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing.”

That is to say, “Father forgive us. Forgive you. Forgive me. Because we do not know what we are doing.”

Clearly, you and I have received unfathomable mercy from God. As He has forgiven us, so we are commanded to forgive each other.

To act as if “it” (whatever “it” may be), never happened, or to act as if “it” never hurt, that would be absurd. Some of us have been truly hurt and deeply hurt by others. And likewise, some of us here have truly hurt and deeply hurt others.

To forgive someone doesn’t mean to pretend that it didn’t hurt, or to return to a state that they could hurt us again, especially if they don’t understand how deeply they’ve hurt us. How many times have I heard, “Father, I’ve tried to explain this to them, and they just don’t get it.” Alright . . .

To forgive in those circumstances, can simply be boiled down to this. To say about the one who has deeply hurt me,

“He doesn’t owe me anything anymore, not even an apology. I don’t need an apology to forgive him. It would be nice, but I don’t need it.” Because this does not even require that they get it, or that you get the last word (which you won’t). It doesn’t even require that there be a confrontation. All it requires is you admitting to yourself that they don’t owe you anything. And the only way you’ll be able to say that, and mean it, is by grace.

And grace is what you and I are about to receive when we walk down these aisles and receive from this altar, the precious Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus, the new and eternal covenant, for the forgiveness of sins. That’s why we receive the Eucharist, for the forgiveness of sins. You do this, you forgive sins, when you remember Me, when you remember that I have forgiven your sins.

There are few things in life more difficult than forgiving someone who has really hurt us. And yet, God’s grace from the the Eucharist, the new and everlasting covenant, which gives us a new heart, is a grace that is able to forgive, and it is extremely freeing when we do.