

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
The Fifth Sunday of Lent
March 17, 2024

A New Covenant

My Sisters and Brothers of the Risen Lord,

"The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. . . I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Jeremiah 31:31,33

We are nearing our final days before Holy Week, and today we consider the Gospel of John toward the end of Jesus's ministry, just prior to his passion and death on the cross and his resurrection three days later. This chapter and these verses fulfill the prophet Jeremiah's description of the new covenant God promised to his people in the Old Testament, as Jesus is mankind's savior and the promise of eternal salvation. As Christians, we know it is through Jesus's death and resurrection, this new covenant was established, and through our own discipleship, we step out of the darkness to the sustaining, eternal light. This is why God sent his only Son to us. And this is how our lives may be transformed through him.

John's Gospel today describes this new covenant in metaphorical terms: the seed and the fruit it produces is the glory Jesus attains through his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension, and it is the glory we can attain through our faith—the mystery of Christ. Yes, a seed will remain just a seed— isolated within itself, unless it is planted and allowed to become what it is destined to be—a gorgeous piece of fruit that will satiate one's hunger and thirst and feed one's life. In this regard, if we cannot break out of ourselves and be planted in others' lives in the fellowship of Jesus Christ, we cannot be truly alive. It is a subtle but expansive thought. We tend to cling to the world and stay within a shell of ourselves, and we look to the world for power, self-interest, fame, financial gain, etc., but in the end, these things cannot satisfy our hungry hearts. They are a dead end. Only through Jesus there is a path to an abundant and eternal life. Therefore, as Jesus says to us today, "those who loves his life loses it, and who hated his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life." To gain heaven we must reject our small and detached existence and bloom in him.

"And what does losing life mean? That is, what does it mean to be the grain of wheat? It means to think less about oneself, about personal interests and to know how to 'see' and to meet the needs of our neighbours, especially the least of them. To joyfully carry out works of charity towards those who suffer in body and spirit is the most authentic way of living the Gospel. It is the necessary foundation upon which our communities can grow in reciprocal fraternity and welcome. I want to see Jesus, but from within. Penetrate his wounds and contemplate that love in his heart for you, for you, for you, for me, for everyone."—Pope Francis, March 18, 2018

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy