

March 21, 2021

5th Sunday of Lent

Jer 31:31-34

Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15

Heb 5:7-9

Jn 12:20-33

UNFOLDING HIS LOVE FOR US!

The unfolding of God's love for us continues in our liturgical celebration. In our last Sunday's Gospel, the famous John 3:16, reminded us the reason why the Son of God came into the world. Love for our well-being was God's reason and nothing else. God wanted to bring us out of darkness into His wonderful light.

In our Gospel this Sunday the love of God for us continues to be disclosed/revealed. As indicated by our Lord Jesus, God's love for us will be manifested in his self-giving sacrifice. This loving sacrifice will be highlighted in Calvary and we will have the opportunity to commemorate it on **Good Friday**. It is in this commemoration/memorial that the **'grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies.'** Nonetheless, this self-giving sacrifice will not be in vain/useless for it will 'bear much fruit.' This **'grain of wheat that will fall to the ground and die'** will rise again after three (3) days. His rising from the dead bares again his love for us – **a love that never abandons his people**. His love wants us to rise with him!

Today, I would like to invite you all to focus your attention on the **'image of the grain of wheat that falls on the ground, dies, and produces much fruit.'** Come to think of it, this image is a paradox. It is counter cultural. It defies logic. **Where in the world you will find that suffering and death can bring life and liberty to people?** We will never find it in the world. We will find it only through Jesus and with Jesus that death brings us life; and suffering offers us glory.

The world will tell us differently. The world will tell us that suffering, and death has no meaning. It is a punishment. But, for Jesus this is not true. When he embraced suffering and death, he gave new meaning to it. He conveyed to us that his suffering and death will bring salvation to humanity. His life was indeed counter cultural.

With this image of the **'grain of wheat that falls on the ground, dies, and produces much fruit'** our Lord Jesus reiterates to us the importance/value of self-giving sacrifice. He calls us to die to sin so we can live. He invites us to give generously so we can receive. He summons us to surrender to him so we can be freed. He asks us to serve humbly so we can share in his glory. He invites us to follow him so we can have life eternal. Undeniably, as followers of Christ, our life calls us to be a sign of contradiction in the world. **Are we willing to be a sign of contradiction in the world? Or we will just go with the flow of the world?**

On **February 3, 1943**, a troop ship named ***The Dorchester*** was carrying more than nine hundred (900) soldiers and military personnel across the North Atlantic. A German U-boat spotted the convoy and fired three torpedoes at the ship. Only one struck the target, but the blast below the waterline fatally damaged the ship. In the cold darkness, the crew was ordered to abandon ship. There were not enough lifeboats for all the men, nor were there enough life jackets.

Four (4) chaplains aboard the ship that night helped comfort those injured in the explosion and those who feared the coming of death. When the ship was ready to sink, the chaplains took off their life jackets and handed them to four young soldiers who had none. They gave up their own lives to save others. The heroic gesture inspired a nation, and Congress voted a special posthumous medal in their honor.

The story of the four (4) chaplains declares to us the self-giving sacrifice they did for others to live. **Isn't it what they did was a clear imitation of what our Lord Jesus did?**

We are still on the Season of Lent. Two weeks to go and we are about to wrap up our Lenten journey. Let us pause for a moment, look deep within, and check what self-giving sacrifice we have done so far. Let us examine ourselves how we used the disciplines of **prayer, fasting, and almsgiving** in embracing the ways of Jesus.

As we offer this Mass, let us pray for each other that we will continue to grow in our desire in imitating the self-giving sacrifice shown to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. May our self-giving sacrifice help us become 'new creation in Christ' this coming Easter season.

God bless our Lenten journey!