

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Give me justice, O God,  
and plead my cause against a nation that is  
faithless.

From the deceitful and cunning rescue me,  
for you, O God, are my strength.

**COLLECT**

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God,  
may we walk eagerly in that same charity  
with which, out of love for the world,  
your Son handed himself over to death.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

**FIRST READING**

Jeremiah 31:31-34

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

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.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM**

Psalm 50

Response:

**A pure heart create for me, O God.**

1. Have mercy on me, God, in your  
kindness.  
In your compassion blot out my offence.  
O wash me more and more from my guilt  
and cleanse me from my sin. **(R.)**
2. A pure heart create for me, O God,  
put a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
nor deprive me of your holy spirit. **(R.)**
3. Give me again the joy of your help;  
with a spirit of fervour sustain me,  
that I may teach transgressors your ways  
and sinners may return to you. **(R.)**

**SECOND READING**

Hebrews 5:7-9

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

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.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of  
God!

If a man serves me, says the Lord, he must  
follow me;  
wherever I am, my servant will be there too.  
Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of  
God!

**GOSPEL**

John 12:20-30

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
John.

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 to myself."

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

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**THE APOSTLES' CREED**

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

*(all bow during the next three lines)*

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the  
Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living  
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.  
**Amen.**

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Hear us, almighty God,  
and, having instilled in your servants  
the teachings of the Christian faith,  
graciously purify them  
by the working of this sacrifice.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

**Amen, Amen I say to you: Unless a grain of  
wheat  
falls to the ground and dies, it remains a  
single grain.  
But if it dies, it bears much fruit.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

We pray, almighty God,  
that we may always be counted among the  
members of Christ,  
in whose Body and Blood we have  
communion.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

18 MARCH 2018

# Sunday Message

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WORD

Year B • Season Colour: Purple • Psalter Week 1



The *hour* of Jesus has arrived. He has reached the end of his public ministry, which reached its climax in the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the action which, ironically, leads to the plot to put Jesus to death.

The coming of the Greeks denotes the gathering of all people to Jesus when he is glorified, which will happen on the cross. Jesus' death is the ultimate expression of his self-giving in fulfilling his mission from God. This attitude is what he expects of his disciples. We should understand the idea of loving or hating one's life in the sense of asking ourselves where our real values in life lie. Do we love the things of this world and would rather hold on to them at any cost, or are we prepared to let them go so that we can receive something infinitely more satisfying in this life and the next?

Throughout his Gospel, the evangelist whom we call John presents Jesus as knowing everything and being in complete control. We have seen how the cross is the instrument of Jesus' being lifted up in glory (exalted). But this does not take away the terror of being crucified. There is no account in John of the struggle of Jesus in Gethsemane to remain faithful to his mission, which is leading him to Calvary. But Jesus does shudder in the face of death on more than one occasion. Here he says, "Now my soul is troubled", but accepts that this is the way in which the Father is to be glorified.

We have seen that God loved the *world*. However, the term appears in different senses in the Fourth Gospel, and here it is used in a negative sense, being linked to the forces opposed to God, personified in "the prince of this world". Here we have the idea of the people who reject Jesus and his message. Judgment will be pronounced on them, but a judgment which they have decided and brought upon themselves. Those who accept Jesus and become truly his disciples will be honoured by the Father and will be where he is. ■

## LEARN

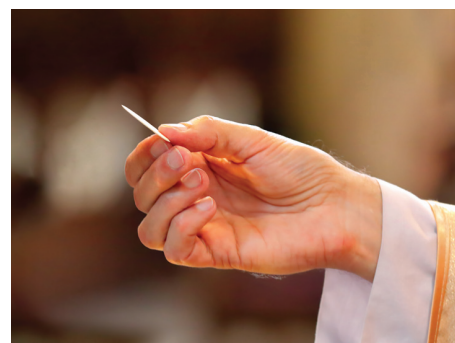
The hour of Jesus is John's way of referring to the event of Jesus' being glorified on the cross.

This event encompasses the entire paschal mystery of Jesus' death, entry into his glorified life and the bestowing of the Spirit on his disciples.

The expression *Agony in the Garden* might be better understood as Jesus' *Struggle in Gethsemane*.

## DO

If you receive Communion in the hand, reflect on the physical action as you perform it. If you receive Communion on the tongue, ask yourself why, and what this gesture means to you.



## SAY

**Father, glorify your name!**

## REFLECT

One of the most significant changes in the celebration of the Eucharist has been enabling people to receive Holy Communion in the hand.

Perhaps as we reflect on today's Gospel, we might see this simple gesture as an expression of what it means to be willing to accept Jesus and his message. First of all, our hands are open. We are indicating that we are ready to receive the bread of life, Jesus' teaching and himself in the Eucharistic bread.

Secondly, our hands are empty. In normal circumstances, if our hands are closed, then we cannot receive what someone is offering us. Our hands might be forming a fist or clutching onto something which we are determined not to let go. This is what Jesus means by loving our life and clinging onto the wrong things. We believe that at communion time we receive Jesus into ourselves. The gesture of opening our hands and holding them up expresses physically the opening up of our deepest selves to receive God's gift. ■