

Integral Faith

"Homily helps and liturgy resources highlighting care for our common home."



Homily Helps, Petitions, and Bulletin Notices for the 5th Sunday of Lent, Cycle B (March 21, 2021)

Homily Helps

† Scripture Passages to Note:

Jeremiah 31: But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel . . . I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts.

Hebrews 5: Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

John 12: Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.

† Comments for the Day:

Today we have a continuation of the covenant theme that has been prominent in the scriptures this Lenten season. Speaking as God's prophet to a nation defeated by the Babylonians, Jeremiah makes sense of this defeat and makes an extraordinary promise to Israel: The defeat Israel has suffered is the result of her infidelity to the covenant. But now God's response is to make a new covenant. Unlike the Sinai covenant this one does not require a set of external laws to be obeyed. It will be written on people's hearts. In mercy, God thus transforms defeat into an opportunity to grow in relationship. With hearts renewed, the people of Israel will obey God's commands, not out of fear of punishment but because they will know God, for to know God deeply is to act as God acts. This covenant foreshadows the new covenant brought about by the sacrifice of Jesus.

Paul's letter to the Hebrews speaks of the sacrifice and humanity of Jesus. Jesus felt human feelings of distress and fear in the face of that sacrifice. As a human, he needed to learn and grow through his human experience. What he learned was obedience. The word "obedience" comes from the Latin "audire," to listen, to hear God speaking through the events in one's life. Jesus listened so intently to God's voice that he was willing to make the sacrifice God asked of him.

In today's gospel we again see Jesus's very human grappling with his mission. The bystanders hear God's message praising his obedience, but, like Nicodemus last week, they cannot hear its real meaning. Jesus explains his human death and resurrection with an image of a grain of wheat. Like the grain put into the earth he will die, but he will be transformed into the one who will feed the world. This image applies to us as well. We can develop our human talents and abilities so that we can be strong grains of wheat, ready to undergo transformation for the world's needs. And we need to die to anything in us that holds us back from following Christ. This is the work of a lifetime and calls for patience with ourselves and others.

This resource is provided by Catholic Climate Covenant in collaboration with the Integral Faith Team, a group of male and female religious, priests, and lay people dedicated to serving the Church.

Pope Francis calls for a society that recognizes the dignity and human rights of all peoples to develop their human capacities, free of exploitation by forces that destroys the earth to produce consumer goods. Can we hear this summons? Can we transform our own lives and choices so as to live as stewards of God's creation and good neighbors to those in need? Can we go beyond our narrow self-interest to help protect our earth?

† **Passages from *Laudato Si'* to Note:**

Yet by itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion. At the same time, we have a sort of superdevelopment of a wasteful and consumerist kind which forms an unacceptable contrast with ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation, while we are all too slow in developing economic institutions and social initiatives which can give the poor regular access to basic resources. (109)

Neglecting to monitor the harm done to nature and the environmental impact of our decisions is only the most striking sign of a disregard for the message contained in the structure of nature itself . . . it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected. (117)

A correct relationship with the created world demands that we not weaken the social dimension of openness to others, much less the transcendent dimension of our openness to the “Thou” of God. (119)

By developing our individual God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world's problems and in offering ourselves to God "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable" (Rom 12:1). We do not understand our superiority as a reason for personal glory or irresponsible dominion, but rather as a different capacity which, in its turn, entails a serious responsibility stemming from our faith. (220)

Related Prayers of the Faithful

Option 1: That we have the courage to die to the forces in society and in ourselves that block our ability to hear the cry of nature, we pray to the Lord ...

Option 2: That we make the effort this Lent to develop our human talents and capacities so that we can put them at the service of God, others and the renewal of the earth, we pray to the Lord ...

Further Resources

Feedback: info@catholicclimatecovenant.org

Webpage: <http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/resource/english-homily-help>

Visit our webpage and sign up to receive these resources delivered to your email inbox each month.