



## Fifth Sunday of Lent March 25, 2012 B

### Reflections on this Sunday's Readings

Today's first reading from Jeremiah ends with these consoling words:

*"I will forgive their evildoing  
and remember their sin no more."*

When people confess sins that they have already received absolution for, it is as if they do not believe that God has forgiven them. The truth is that once we have shown even *imperfect* sorrow for our sins, we are forgiven. Imperfect contrition is motivated by the 'fear of losing heaven' and 'the fear of going to hell.' *Perfect* contrition is being sorry because we have offended and failed our God who loves us so much. Isn't it awesome to know that God has a poor memory for our sins once we have repented of them?

Recalling some sins is not all bad—especially when it helps us not to fall into them again. A recovering alcoholic's memory of his/her disastrous past would, hopefully, convince him/her not to ever drink again.

**"Jesus offered prayers and supplication with loud cries and tears."**

The above verse is from Hebrews 5, today's second reading. How many of us think of Jesus, the powerful miracle worker, who confronted the church and civic leaders of his time, crying out loud to God with tears? Scripture scholars tell us that this Hebrews verse is a reference to Jesus' agony in the garden as he struggled with the cup of suffering handed him by God. Isn't it consoling to know that our Lord and Savior struggled with the difficult and painful circumstances of his life? Jesus' crying out to God shows us that even though he was divine, he was also *fully* human. There is nothing in our human experience that Jesus is not acquainted with. Someone once said that *there is nothing that we suffer that has not first passed through the heart of God in Jesus: poverty, exile, betrayal, loneliness, rejection, abuse, abandonment, etc.* Isn't it comforting to know that our God does indeed know in his heart everything we experience and feel? Can you imagine the impact that this might have on our relationship with Jesus if we took into our being this

very human dimension of Jesus' life on earth? The God spoken of in these verses from Hebrews (5:7-9) is not some aloof or distant God, but a God totally *in sync* with our pain and suffering.

### Today's Gospel

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks of his 'special hour,' the 'grain of wheat dying,' 'hating one's life,' and other things. The following are eight comments on today's Gospel.

1. Jesus begins his discourse by speaking of his "*hour*"—a reference to his return to God. He will pass through death, be raised up, and return to his Father.

2. Jesus uses the analogy of a *wheat grain* to speak of life and death. Just as a grain of wheat must first die before it bears fruit, so too must Jesus die prior to his Resurrection, and so too must we die to sin and selfishness before we bear godly fruit in our lives. Married couples know this more than other people. For the marriage to grow, each spouse must frequently die to his/her own desires.

3. "*Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life, will preserve it.*" This implies that those who cling to their lives, concerned only about themselves, will eventually lose out on the meaning of life, which is to love and serve others. Thomas Merton talks about our *true self* and *false self*. The *true self* is that part of us that seeks to follow God and his ways. The *false self* is that part that wants to be independent of God and his ways, the part that is self-centered, controlling, jealous, etc. This self we must 'hate'—or we might say 'deny'—and not allow to control our lives. This false self must be transformed by praying, fasting and penance.

4. "*Whoever serves me must follow me... The Father will honor whoever serves me.*" Serving Jesus means, among other things, being willing to lay down one's life for others—to die to the desires of the false self. To serve Jesus is to follow him in his path of love and to carry one's cross. Such service and love will honor the Father.

5. “*Save me from the hour*” is a reference to Jesus’ agony in the garden. It is a beautiful statement about Jesus’ humanity. As a person who loves life and people, he has no desire to die; he recoils from it. Yet, if going through this “*hour*” is what he must do, then he is willing to embrace it.

6. “*Then came a voice from heaven*” is reminiscent of the voice that spoke at Jesus’ baptism and transfiguration. “*I have glorified the Father.*” Jesus gives glory to the Father (and so do we) by following the will of God. Jesus goes on to say: “*I always do the things that please the Father.*”

7. “*Now is the time of judgment in this world. Now the ruler of this world will be drawn out.*” The judgment is our ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to Jesus. When we say ‘yes,’ love is released into the world, and darkness and evil are overthrown, and vice-versa.

8. “*When I am lifted up, I will draw everyone to myself*” is a reference to Jesus’ cross and how the power of his love will attract and draw people to him.

### **The Rosary — a way to pray for global and personal intentions**

Speaking about the Rosary, Blessed John Paul II said: “*The Rosary has accompanied me in moments of joy and in moments of difficulty. To it I have entrusted any number of concerns: in it I have always found comfort. The Rosary is my favorite prayer. It is marvelous in its simplicity and its depth.*”

Concerning the importance of intercessory prayer, the late Anthony de Mello, S.J., said: “*Until the next life we shall not realize how the destinies of persons and nations have been shaped, not so much by the external actions of powerful people and by events that seemed inevitable, but by the quiet, silent, irresistible daily prayer of persons the world will never know.*”

Personally, I find the Rosary to be a wonderful way to pray for a wide range of global, church and personal needs, and a great way to fulfill my promise to pray for people who have asked me to pray for them.

### **JOYFUL MYSTERIES**

***Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38).*** As we ponder Mary carrying Jesus, let us pray for all women with an unwanted or difficult pregnancy, that they will have the courage and support to choose life.

***Mary Visits her Cousin Elizabeth (Lk 1:39-45).*** For all who visit the sick and homebound. For all who work and live in nursing homes.

***Birth of Jesus (Lk 2:1-8).*** For all pregnant women. For those seeking to conceive or adopt a child. For parents and adoption agencies.

***Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2:22-28).*** For parents, that they will dedicate their children to Jesus and raise them in a church family. For all who have asked us to pray for them.

***Finding of Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2:41-50).*** For missing children and their grieving parents. For the liberation of children and teenagers forced into slavery or prostitution.

### **SORROWFUL MYSTERIES**

***Agony in the Garden (Mk 14:32-42).*** For all suffering in body, mind and spirit, and for all who work with the suffering.

***Scourging at the Pillar (Mt 27:26).*** For all who live in violent situations. For the apprehension or conversion of violent people. For all engaged in the war against terrorism.

***Crowning with Thorns (Mk 15:16-20).*** For all who are mentally ill and for those who suffer from depression or migraine headaches.

***Jesus Carries his Cross (Mk 15:21-22).*** For all who are carrying a cross at this time and for their loved ones, that the crosses of life will make them better and not bitter. For all who have asked us to pray for them.

***Jesus Dies on the Cross (Mk 15:23-41).*** For all who are dying at this time, that they may have a peaceful death. For hospice workers. For an end to capital punishment and euthanasia.

### **LUMINOUS MYSTERIES**

***Baptism of Jesus (Lk 3:21-22).*** For all who are preparing for Baptism and entry into our Church. For all who have asked us to pray for them.

***Wedding Feast of Cana (Jn 2:1-12).*** For engaged and married couples, especially struggling marriages.

***Proclamation of the Kingdom (Lk 4:14-15).*** For all engaged in the teaching and preaching ministry of the Church.

**Transfiguration (Lk 9:28-36).** For all who work and minister in retreat houses. For spiritual directors and retreatants.

**Institution of the Eucharist (Lk 22:19).** For Catholics who no longer come to Mass. In thanksgiving for our Adoration Chapel and for all who help us to maintain prayer 24/7 on our campus.

## GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

**Resurrection (Mk 16:1-20).** As we meditate on Jesus' victory over evil, let us pray for all engaged in fighting the forces of evil in our world—poverty, human trafficking, terrorism, abortion. For all who will be preaching in churches next weekend.

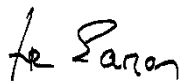
**Ascension (Acts 1:6-11).** For the deceased and living members of our Church family. In thanksgiving for all who give of their time, treasure and talent to our parish and wider community.

**Descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-13).** For a greater awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence and activity in our lives. For all making difficult decisions.

**Assumption of Mary into Heaven (Rev. 12:1).** For the dying and for the souls in purgatory. For all those who have asked us to pray for them.

**Mary, Crowned Queen of Heaven (Rev. 12:1).** For government and church leaders. For the conversion of unbelievers. For a greater awareness of Mary's presence in our lives.

Have a blessed week,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr Aaron". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.