

## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent (B) How Do You Want to See Jesus in Your Life?

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:3-4,12-13,14-15; Hebrews 5:7-9; John 12:20-33

Dear family and friends of CCST,

This Sunday is the last of our Lenten preparations for the great event of our salvation. Next week is Palm Sunday, and we will enter the holiest days of our Liturgical year.

The reading from the Gospel of John provides a profound prayer from a heartfelt request of unexpected people - the outsiders of the Jewish faith, the Greeks. They expressed their desire to see Jesus: "Sir, we want to see Jesus." This request was made during the increasing hostility against Jesus. It reminds us of an invitation to contemplate Jesus' profound act of love and sacrifice for our redemption and let us turn it into our own personal prayer: "I want to see Jesus."

When Philip and Andrew introduced some Greeks to Jesus in their desire to see and know Jesus, His response was unexpected: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." At first look, our Lord's reply might seem unrelated to their desire. Their request is "to see," but Jesus' response is "to die." What is this narrative telling us?

Actually, Jesus answered them in an instructive and formative way. He wanted them to see him differently. He invited them (and us) to see Him from an entirely transformative perspective. Usually, when we pray to Jesus, we want to see him in his divinity, gaze at him in his bright, shining light, and look up to him as a defender of the oppressed, a miracle worker and healer, a God who always answers our prayers. We want to hear his victory over evil, pain, and suffering when we come to him. Indeed, he is!

But Jesus introduced himself differently, and it goes against common human expectations. It challenges us to journey with him into the unpopular, less-traveled road known as "dying to oneself." It is easy for us to see God when everything is in order and smoothly going well, when we are healthy and have friends when our family is doing well and secure, and when our finances are stable. How about when things fall apart or you are humiliated, insulted, betrayed, and left alone? Can you still see Jesus? Do you find being inspired by his way of loving, forgiving, being patient, and trusting?

A week from now, we will enter Holy Week, during which our Lord Jesus is paving the way for us, giving himself to us so we can fight the snare of the devil, who uses pride to destroy us. We are invited to journey with him in an intense moment. Once again, we will hear his story of being abandoned, betrayed, humiliated, and insulted. We will listen to once again the worst tragedy in human history, but also the incomprehensible act of giving oneself for the life of all – the bloody memory of his passion and death on the cross.

We heard our Lord Jesus speaking this as the "hour" (Jn 12:27). He said, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (Jn 12:32). This is the hour of his supreme sacrifice. The hour when death and evil will be defeated by love. The hour when the mortal will receive immortality. As prophesied by the prophet Jeremiah, it is the hour when God writes his law on the hearts of His people, assuring them that He forgives their evil-doing and no longer remembers their sins (cf. Jer. 31:33-34). Our Lord Jesus fulfills this prophecy through his sacrifice on the cross. He accepts it all, bears it all, and ends it all. It is the hour prayed for by the psalm, "Create a clean heart in me, O God." It is the hour of mercy.

Yes, we want to see Jesus. To see Jesus is to die from our selfishness or self-centeredness, which requires humility. It is time for us to step away from our worldly concerns and pay some time and attention to what is happening in our souls. Jesus is offering us the chance to take another prayerful look at ourselves and others to see afresh what He wants us to see, know what He offers, and know how we are doing with our gifts.

In the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, we meet Jesús. We recall, celebrate, and proclaim his hour of mercy, a timeless reality we engage with every time we celebrate the Holy Eucharist. The power of the cross, God's redeeming love, becomes accessible in our time. We are not just drawn nearer to God's selfless love; we are in communion with the one who loves us, Jesus.

We who want to see Jesus believe that no matter how difficult life is, no matter how painful the dying to self is, no matter how great our sin is, even if death itself runs in our veins, we know in Jesus we have life. As we receive him through the Holy Eucharist, let us ask for the grace of courage and strength of faith that we make our every thought, every word, every breath, every good deed, and every act in memory of his sacrificial love.

Let me share some practical ways of seeing Jesus through "dying to self." You may choose to do only one and repeat it several times.

1. Practice selflessness: Look for opportunities to put others' needs before your own, whether through acts of service, sacrifice, or simple gestures of kindness.
2. Cultivate empathy: Seek to understand others' perspectives and experiences and respond with compassion and care.
3. Forgive others: let go of grudges and resentment, and choose to extend grace and mercy to those who have wronged you.
4. Serve others: actively seek ways to use your skills, time, and resources to benefit others without seeking recognition or reward.
5. Practice humility: Resist the temptation to seek attention or praise for your actions and instead focus on lifting others up and allowing them to shine.
6. Advocate for the marginalized: Advocate for those who are disadvantaged or oppressed and use your voice and influence to promote justice and equality.
7. Love your enemies: Follow Jesus' example of loving and praying for those who oppose or mistreat you, seeking reconciliation and peace.
8. Live generously: share your blessings and abundance with others, whether it's through financial giving, sharing your possessions, or providing support and encouragement.
9. Offer hospitality: Open your home and heart to those in need, welcoming them with warmth and generosity.
10. Live with integrity: Strive to align your actions and words with Jesus's values and teachings, consistently choosing to live in a way that honors God and serves others.

May we be open and receptive to God's grace.

Fr. Manny Hewe  
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