

## Fifth Sunday of Lent – March 18, 2018 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant, and I had to show myself their master, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and relatives how to know the LORD. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more.

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

R. (12a) Create a clean heart in me, O God.

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness;  
in the greatness of your compassion wipe out  
my offense.

Thoroughly wash me from my guilt  
and of my sin cleanse me.

R. Create a clean heart in me, O God.

A clean heart create for me, O God,  
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.  
Cast me not out from your presence,  
and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

R. Create a clean heart in me, O God.

Give me back the joy of your salvation,  
and a willing spirit sustain in me.  
I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners shall return to you.

R. Create a clean heart in me, O God.

### Scripture Reading: Hebrews 5:7-9

In the days when Christ Jesus was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

### Gospel: John 12:20-33

Some Greeks who had come to worship at the Passover Feast came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 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. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me.

"I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." The crowd there heard it and said it was thunder; but others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come for my sake but for yours. Now is the time of judgment on this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." He said this indicating the kind of death he would die.



### Lenten Prayer

O God, bless us during this season  
of spiritual renewal. Fill our minds and hearts  
with love, that we may be a sign of Jesus to  
all those living in our midst.

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## **Fifth Sunday of Lent – March 18, 2018 – Good Shepherd Parish**

### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

A tiny grain finds itself planted deep in the soil, with its small self, tucked into complete darkness. And yet it is fearless. It is sheltered by the tough, safe shell that is its home. The seed belongs there and it knows it, in quiet, in growth but then calamity. The shelter turns tight and invading and painful. Our growing seed is shocked. Its protector is opposing it, holding it back, crushing it. Suddenly, as if planned from all eternity, the husky shell cracks right open. Wait, wait, I need you! You know how I depend on you! Wait!" The seed goes to pieces. What is left of it copes somehow, crazily extending a new, thin arm outward and "steady by jerks" slithers its whole self through the cracks in its shell. It has to get out. It dares its way into the rough, cold mud. How foolish and shaming. Stay where safety was, you fool! The transforming little self slowly takes on an unexpected new life. It dares a new home now in, surprisingly, the slippery soil. It moves with caution and upwards it goes.

But there is much in its path, including a huge, unmovable rock: a jagged, rough, uncaring rock, heedless of tiny green shoots. And so the story ends, doesn't it? Except that the former seed appears to have will power. It is seeking something—urging itself toward some objective, rooting its way with intuitive ambition. Fingering along the brutal under-edge of the rock, fearful and with rending pain, and after what seems like years, it achieves the far edge of this gnarly thing and guess what. It starts upward again. Now there are hard clods to press through, and pebbles aplenty. The higher it goes the more dry the surrounding soil becomes. The top crust of ground, at last achieved, forbids any penetration. It is an ultimate, intractable, stupefying barrier.

And now the story does end, except for one voice from deep within. Push. Push, it whispers. I am with you. The young sprout feels around for just a thinnest lesion in the tough upper skin. With a certainty that now is written on its heart, this vine-to-be breaks through to where it was meant to be. In a heaven of light and warmth, bathed in the sun's astonishing rays, our plant stretches and yawns in the wafting breezes of Spring. It is just like our own journey, isn't it? Dark corridors can sometimes seem to be our only life. But Jesus says, do not worry, child, trust me. "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" (Gospel). This is the real conclusion to our story, isn't it?

### **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. In this reading the Lord says, "... I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sins no more." Do you ever feel God's forgiveness? Are you good at forgiving? How about at forgetting?
2. Jesus spent his life alleviating the suffering of others. Is he finished with that, or does he continue to care for suffering people today? If so, how? Are you a caretaker, or are you cared for?
3. When Jesus thought about what was coming he said, "I am troubled now. Yet what should I say?" What are some of the things that trouble you? Who do you call on when you are troubled?

### **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

### **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

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