

GOSPEL

John 12:20-33

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 men to myself.'
By these words he indicated the kind of death he
would die.

A REFLECTION OF POPE FRANCIS

21 March 2021

On this Fifth Sunday of Lent, the liturgy proclaims the Gospel in which Saint John refers to an episode that occurred in the final days of Christ's life, shortly before the Passion (cf. Jn 12:20-33). While Jesus was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, several Greeks, curious because of what he had been doing, express the wish to see him. They approach the apostle Philip and say to him: "We wish to see Jesus" (v. 21). "We wish to see Jesus". Let us remember this: "We wish to see Jesus". Philip tells Andrew and then together they report it to the Teacher. In the request of those Greeks we can glimpse the request that many men and women, of every place and every time, pose to the Church and also to each one of us: "We wish to see Jesus".

And how does Jesus respond to that request? In a way that makes us think. He says: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.... Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (vv. 23-24). These words do not seem to respond to the request those Greeks made. In reality, they surpass it. In fact, Jesus reveals that for every man and woman who wants to find him, He is the hidden seed ready to die in order to bear much fruit. As if to say: if you wish to know me, if you wish to understand me, look at the grain of wheat that dies in soil, that is, look at the cross.

The sign of the Cross comes to mind, which over the centuries has become the symbol par excellence of Christians. Even today, those who wish to "see Jesus", perhaps coming from countries and cultures where Christianity is not well-known, what do they see first? What is the most common sign they encounter? The Crucifix, the Cross. In churches, in the homes of Christians, even worn on their persons. The important thing is that the sign be consistent with the Gospel: the cross cannot but express love, service, unreserved self-giving: only in this way is it truly the "tree of life", of overabundant life.

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Today too, many people, often without saying so, implicitly would like to “see Jesus”, to meet him, to know him. This is how we understand the great responsibility we Christians and of our communities have. We too must respond with the witness of a life that is given in service, a life that takes upon itself the style of God – closeness, compassion and tenderness – and is given in service. It means sowing seeds of love, not with fleeting words but through concrete, simple and courageous examples, not with theoretical condemnations, but with gestures of love. Then the Lord, with his grace, makes us bear fruit, even when the soil is dry due to misunderstandings, difficulty or persecution, or claims of legalism or clerical moralism. This is barren soil. Precisely then, in trials and in solitude, while the seed is dying, that is the moment in which life blossoms, to bear ripe fruit in due time. It is in this intertwining of death and life that we can experience the joy and true fruitfulness of love, which always, I repeat, is given in God’s style: closeness, compassion, tenderness.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What would you say to someone who is, perhaps without knowing, seeking Jesus?



Heart: Pope Francis describes “God’s style” as being closeness, compassion, and tenderness. What has your experience been of “God’s style”?



Hands: How might we be better prepared to share our faith so that others might “see Jesus” in our words and actions?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.