

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

Jeremiah 31:31–34
Hebrews 5:7–9
John 12:20–33

MONDAY*

Luke 1:26–38
"The Holy Spirit will come upon you . . ."

TUESDAY

John 8:21–30
"Where I am going, you cannot come."

WEDNESDAY

John 8:31–42
" . . . the truth will make you free."

THURSDAY

John 8:51–59
" . . . before Abraham was, I am."

FRIDAY

John 10:31–42
"I have shown you many good works from the Father."

SATURDAY

John 11:45–56
"Many of the Jews . . . believed in him."

The "Hour" Is Now!

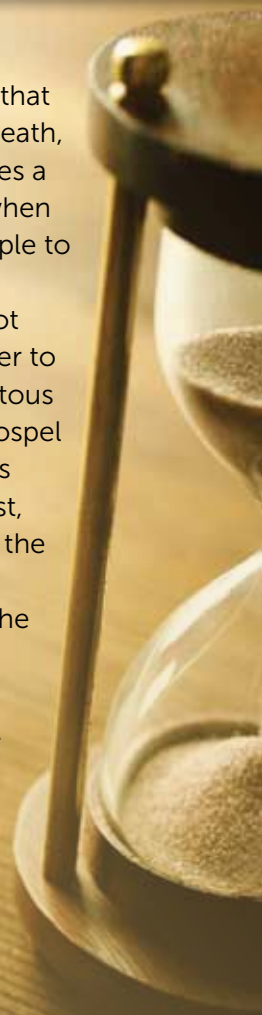
God's plan of salvation is present in all three readings for today's liturgy. As we approach the end of Lent, the Scriptures remind us of what God had in mind for us through the suffering, death, and glorification of Jesus.

Jeremiah envisioned a covenant that would be renewed and imprinted in the heart of each person. In the Letter to the Hebrews, we are reminded that Jesus Christ is the mediator of the new covenant. This passage reveals that a key component to salvation is obedience.

John proclaims the universality of this covenant for all, when Jesus announces his "hour" has come. Christ's salvation is for everyone, and it is evident in the Greeks' sincere desire to see Jesus. Their request is reminiscent of the disciples of John the Baptist who were invited to "Come and see!"

This Gospel passage tells us that through Jesus' suffering and death, the glory of the Father becomes a reality. Jesus states it clearly when he says: "I . . . will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32).

"Hour," in this sense, does not refer to a time of day, but rather to that sense of *kairos*, a momentous revelation in Jesus' life. The Gospel proclamation that the hour has come offers three insights: First, Jesus reveals that death is not the end but the beginning of a life transformed in love. Second, the "hour" is a moment in time where suffering and glory are two halves of the same whole. Finally, eternal life has been given to all. Discipleship is walking to glory through the physical death that is just part of our journey of life and love in Jesus, the Christ.



The Faith of the Church

In the Second Vatican Council document "The Church's Missionary Activity," the bishops declared that God calls us to share in his life and glory. To carry out this plan, God sent Jesus into the world as servant to all even to the point of death. Our response to the generosity and love of Jesus is to carry out a mission of service to all those in need (*Ad Gentes Divinitus* 2–3).



Questions of the Week

Today's Gospel provides an excellent commentary on life and death. The image of the seed dying to yield fruitfulness points to the death of Jesus as the seed of new life. Called to be life for others, we must die to self to bring life to others.

Adults

What are several ways I have forgone my own desires to be of help to others?

Children

How can I be of help to my family, my classmates, or my friends?

*Solemnity: The Annunciation of the Lord

Responding to God's Word . . .

We have a model of total service in the life, ministry, and death of Jesus. Today's Gospel reminds me of a story told to me by a missionary in the African country of Uganda. His faith was deepened by a man who gave his life to save his village from torture during the regime of Idi Amin. As he lay dying in the dusty road, the man told the priest, "Did you not say that we must give our life for the sake of others?"

Our final "hour" of giving often comes at the end of our life. However,

the journey to that point is eased by the ways in which we willingly give bits of ourselves for the sake of others. For example, the parent who sacrifices sleep for a sick child or crying baby; the dying to self that is part of the daily routine of a care-giving spouse; the piece of one's heart that dies with the loss of a loved one.

All of these are examples of the letting go that Jesus models for us. Our hope during these difficult times is found in the promise: "It [the seed that dies] produces much fruit."



British poet Francis Thompson wrote, "Nothing begins and nothing ends / That is not paid with moan; / For we are born in others' pain, / And perish in our own." Many people blame God for the suffering earth. The Bible, however, tells us that suffering began with the first sin. It was this suffering, caused by sin, that Jesus accepted on the cross and made into a vehicle of salvation. Paul says, "We know that in all things [suffering included] God works for good with those who love him" (Romans 8:28).

For reflection . . .

What is one suffering that brought good into my life in the long run?

JESUS DID NOT COME TO DO AWAY
WITH SUFFERING OR REMOVE IT.
HE CAME TO FILL IT WITH HIS PRESENCE.
PAUL CLAUDELL

FROM *MISSION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

Fruit of Our Salvation

We give
praise and thanks
to you, O Lord. Your
death has yielded the fruit
of our salvation and glory.
Strengthen us to face the small
deaths we must endure. Make
of our life a beautiful overflowing
well of service and compassion for
others. Guide us as we follow
you on the path of
life that takes us through the
shadows of death. We believe
that we will rise with
you in glory and light.
Help our unbelief!
Amen.

Carry this thought in your
heart as a guide for your faith
journey this week.

Do not seek your own
advantage, but that of
the other.

1 Corinthians 10:24

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. Take an inventory of your possessions: clothing, bedding, or food and give away what is not essential.

In the workplace or in school. Gather used books to donate to a local prison or library in an impoverished area near your home.

In the community. Volunteer with a local hospice, children's hospital, or transitional housing shelter.

Profile in Faith

Mercy Volunteer Corps

Service opportunities are offered by Mercy Volunteer Corps. Together with the Sisters of Mercy, lay women and men give one or two years of service to the poor and marginalized.

Living a communal life of simplicity and prayer, these volunteers cultivate mercy and justice through compassionate service and social justice.

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Author: Carol A. Gura
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