

5th Sunday of Lent – A

29 March 2009

The Crucifix Reveals the Heart of God

The Greek-speaking visitors mentioned in today's Gospel had come to Jerusalem on pilgrimage to celebrate the Passover, the most important Jewish holy day.

- ✍ And when they hear about Jesus, they give us one of the most **beautiful** prayers in the whole Bible.
- ✍ So simple, and so powerful.
- ✍ They come up to St Philip and say, "Sir, **we would like to see Jesus.**"

Jesus' response to this request is kind of confusing.

- ✍ Instead of just saying, "OK, show them in," he gives a **long explanation** of "his hour," his coming sacrifice on the cross.
- ✍ At first glance, this seems like a **denial**.
- ✍ But his last statement shows that actually, he is **granting** their request.
- ✍ "And when I am lifted up from the earth," he explains, "I will **draw everyone** to myself."

By his **crucifixion**, Jesus **reveals himself** to everyone, including these Greek visitors included.

- ✍ Christ **wants** everyone to find him, to see him, to learn to know and love him - that's why he became man in the first place.
- ✍ And so he allows himself to be **crucified**, which showing us both his outer self, and his inner self.
- ✍ The crucifixion **exposes his heart** for all to see - a heart **blazing** with so much love that it is willing to die for our sake, to **suffer** unspeakable **pain and humiliation** in order to reopen to us the gates of heaven.
- ✍ The crucifix is the great revelation of the **heart of God**.
- ✍ If we want to "see Christ," to see and know God, we have only to **raise our eyes** to behold him dying on the cross in order to give us true life.
- ✍ There Christ is **most attractive** to us - and we should always remember that we are no less attractive to **him** when we bend under the weight of our **own** cross and weakness.

A Widow Learns a Lesson

We all **really need** to experience this love of Christ; otherwise the **demands** of our Christian life will **wear us down**.

If we don't discover that **everything God asks of us** comes from his **love** for us, we will just see them as **meaningless duties**.

But once we **encounter the face of Christ** smiling at us, the goodness of God **shining** upon us, then these duties turn into an **exciting adventure**.

That's the experience of all the saints, even those who underwent **excruciating martyrdom**.

A story about a widow **illustrates** this beautifully.

- ✍ A woman was married to a man she **did not love**.
- ✍ He made her get up every morning at **five** o'clock, cook his breakfast, and serve it at **six** o'clock sharp.
- ✍ He made her **wait on** him, and was **exacting** in his demands on her time.
- ✍ Her life was **made miserable** trying to satisfy the requests of her husband.
- ✍ Finally, he **died**.
- ✍ After a few years, she **married again**.
- ✍ This time she married a man whom she **really loved**.
- ✍ One day while **clearing out** some old papers, she came across the strict **set of rules** her former husband had written out for her to obey.
- ✍ Carefully she read them over: "Get up at five, serve breakfast as six sharp..."
- ✍ On and on she read.
- ✍ Then she stopped and thought for a second.
- ✍ It dawned on her that she was **still fulfilling every single one of those demands**, but she hadn't realized it, because **this** time she was doing it for **love's sake**.

It is not really **difficult** to follow Christ and obey his commandments and teachings, **if** we really **love** him.

But we can't really love him if we don't **allow ourselves to experience** how much **he** loves **us**.

Getting Ready for Holy Week

We are so **used to** seeing crucifixes that this deep and beautiful meaning **behind** them is often **lost** on us.

- ✍ We have to **make an effort** to shake ourselves out of that routine.
- ✍ This is one reason behind the season of Lent.
- ✍ In just a couple of weeks, we will be celebrating, in the **liturgy of Holy Week**, this great mystery of Christ's cross and resurrection.
- ✍ Is there anything we can **do now**, practically speaking, to help **refresh our awareness** of the meaning behind the crucifix, anything that could help us **prepare ourselves** to celebrate Holy Week more deeply, more beautifully?

The answer is, "Yes." We all want to "see Jesus." We all recognize that, while we know Jesus (or we wouldn't be here), we have not always loved Him completely – we have not allowed the

depth of His love – seen in the crucifix – to effect our lives completely – because we are all sinners – in great need of His love.

If you want to “see Jesus,” then (tomorrow) to-night is a prime opportunity to see Him, to experience the depth of His love for us – when He offers us His forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance – in Confession.

There we come to “see Jesus” as He reveals the depth of His love to us – on an individual and profound level – when we come to Him in the Sacrament of Penance, acknowledge our weak heart – and allow Him to forgive us. Then, having been reconciled to Him, we can do some other things to really get ready for Holy Week.

We don't have to get **complicated** - even a **simple** effort can sometimes make a **big** difference.

- ✍ A **family movie night** this week or weekend could be a good idea - watching and discussing together some great Catholic film [*maybe "The Passion of the Christ," "Jesus of Nazareth,"*
- ✍ Doing a **special holy hour**, individually or as a family, to pray for each other and your loved ones.
- ✍ Performing some Christian **work of mercy** - visiting the sick, the homebound...
- ✍ If we **do our part** to help **remind ourselves** of what the crucifix really means - its revelation of the heart of God - Christ will **come to our aid**.
- ✍ And when **that** happens, we will experience more **deeply** and more **personally** the fulfillment of his promise: "...when I am lifted up from the earth, I will **draw everyone to myself**."

Just as He draws close to us in the Sacrament of Penance, we draws close to us also through this holy Mass, let's let him draw **us** closer to himself more than **ever**, so that we can begin to hear, and to share, the **love-filled beatings of his heart**.