



5th SUNDAY OF LENT

THE GOSPEL. John 12:20-33

I am troubled now. Yet what should I say?
'Father save me from this hour'?

Jesus,

You are
troubled now

- by unclean water,
- by friends being trafficked.
- by racial injustice, starving children
and all the dying from a
virus and deluge of
drugs and
guns.

What can we say
but,

we call your name.
We beg you to be with us now.
Help us right the wrongs, not counting the cost,
and become abundant
fields of wheat
for you

THE FIRST READING Jeremiah 31:31-34

I will be their God and they will be my people.

God

writes on hearts,
not on stone tablets now.

He is our God and we are his people.

We find him in all things new.

The God of surprises
loves us, forgives
and forgets
our sins.

God, we
want to receive,
and to cherish and forgive,

just as you
do.

Let it be.

THE SECOND READING. Hebrews 5:7-9

He offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears

Jesus
you knew fear.

You called for help.
With loud
cries.

Your tears knew
our worst
pain.

Yet you pick us up,
you hold us
and you
weep with
us.

We give great
thanks to you,

Savior, friend.

Anne Osdieck

REFLECTION: 'Change our Hearts: Fr. Stephen Bevans SVD

*Change our hearts this time,
Your word says it can be.
Change our minds this time
Your life could make us free.
We are the people your call set apart,
Lord, this time change our hearts.*

I've always loved this song by Rory Cooney, and I think it is a wonderful prayer to pray in response to the readings on the fifth Sunday of Lent. We certainly need the change of heart promised by Jeremiah—each of us individually, and as a church, a nation, and citizens of our world. I don't need to catalogue all the things that we need to change. Maybe it's enough just to quote some lines from Pope Francis' book, *Let Us Dream* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 2020): "How will we deal with the hidden pandemics of this world, the pandemics of hunger and violence and climate change? . . . This is a moment to dream big, to rethink our priorities—what we value, what we want, what we seek—and to commit to act in our daily life on what we have dreamed of." Dream. And pray for a change of heart.

How does God change our hearts? Certainly not in any magical, mechanical way, like you change a battery in a flashlight or in a remote-control device. It's much more subtle. God—the Spirit, actually—makes the first move, of course, putting the desire for change in our hearts, that restlessness of heart that St. Augustine famously wrote about. Through the church, the Spirit gives us a time like Lent, a time when we are surrounded by scripture texts and communal practices that call us to change. Gradually, gradually, the Spirit begins to work.

Several of these powerful Lenten texts are in the gospel reading for today: Only if a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies can it yield an

abundant harvest. Only if we stop clinging to our life and let it go will our lives actually flourish. Only if we, like Jesus, open up to our suffering will we actually be able to get through it. As we open up to these texts and begin to follow Jesus more closely in service and various spiritual practices—join in the dance—are our hearts “tendered.” And when that happens the Spirit is able to change our hearts. God never works without our cooperation, but ultimately that working is God’s work. We are able, then, to look upon the cross and be drawn into the life of Jesus.

It is this being drawn into Jesus’ life that is the point of Lent. As we move toward the climax of Lent on Passion/Palm Sunday next week, and then into Holy Week and the Triduum, we can participate in the Paschal Mystery with our whole hearts, hearts now tendered and changed by the Spirit’s grace and love.

Change our hearts this time! Your word says it can be.
