

# THE EMMAUS SERIES

## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, Year B

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Hebrews 5:7-9

John 12:20-30

*He prayed with loud cries and tears to the one able to save him*

As our destination draws near, at the end of an important journey, we may well have mixed feelings. We look forward to arrival; but we may be uncertain and anxious about the outcome.

As we face the challenge of entering deeply into the climax of the Church's year of faith - the commemoration of the Saviour's PASCHAL MYSTERY – it is as if the liturgy of this last Sunday of our journey anticipates our mood and reassures us. The readings bring us some of the greatest texts of the Scriptures, texts which – as we stand among the Greek pilgrims who wanted to 'see Jesus' - help us, in the words of the gospel, to come to terms with 'the kind of death Jesus was to die'.

The horror of the Saviour's Cross is plainly stated: his 'obedience' to the Father's will, according the letter to the Hebrews, is made with 'prayer and entreaty, with loud cries and tears'. And John's gospel tells us, 'his soul was troubled', as his fateful 'hour' approached – in which he was to give all, like 'a wheat grain' which 'falls on the ground and dies'.

If he invites us to share this fate with him – 'wherever I am, my servant will be there too' – he also helps us to trust in his Father, as we face the ordeals of our personal lives. His prayer is 'heard', and through the sufferings which have been a sharing in the destructiveness and darkness of our world, he enters into a new and final existence. In the words of the letter to the Hebrews, he is 'made perfect'; as John's gospel puts it, he is 'glorified'. This is a powerful statement in biblical language - God's 'glory' is the incomparable divine greatness. Having 'emptied himself' to become one with us, the manhood he shares with us is now filled with divine greatness – and the grain which falls to the ground 'yields a rich harvest', transforming the whole of creation.

The outcome is certain, therefore, and beyond all humanity's imagining. It is the inauguration of the 'new covenant written in our hearts', foretold by Jeremiah, and sealed with the Saviour's blood. The Crucified One will become 'a source of eternal salvation' for all who become his followers (Hebrews). Having been 'lifted up from the earth', he will 'draw all people to himself', that they may share in his new existence (John).

The Church's liturgy prepares us well for what lies at the end of our journey. May it prove a faith-filled meeting with the generosity of our God, for each one of us.

John Thornhill sm