

SPIRITUAL LIFE

5th Sunday of Lent

By: Fr. Greg Ames

I saw a review of a computer game called “Central High.” It is an interactive game in which the player takes the role of Kevin, a suburban teenager, who has been selected to save the world from angry, unseen aliens. Each decision Kevin makes in six days determines the fate of the world. As Kevin, you face hundreds of questions from whether to eat salad for dinner, whether to talk back to your teacher, whether to steal Dad’s car. Kevin can gain additional points when he gives a good example. The problem, said the article, is that the game is hard to win. *I lost three times in a row before giving up in frustration* the reviewer complained. She said that listening to the mother say cheerfully, again and again, Have a nice day dear, was incentive to do the wrong thing. So that is what she did. She picked the clearly wrong answers. *The result, unfortunately, is that nothing happens. The game just ends. You sit through endless hours of repetitive dialogue with no ultimate payoff.*

Our life is not a computer game, but it is about choices. And sometimes, most times, it is hard to choose. We sit through hours, days, years of repetitive dialogue. But the payoff is not saving the world from aliens. It is becoming more like Jesus. Lent is that time of examining our choices. Entertaining as it may be to evaluate someone else’s choices, it is about our choices. How’s Lent been...not started yet? No worry. Whether you are seeking to salvage or deepen your Lent, today I offer you three verses. Pick one. Say it aloud the whole week. Pray it each day and think about it when you make a daily choice:

I will make a new covenant The words are from Jeremiah, speaking at a time when Israel had been unfaithful to God and failed in its commitments. Jeremiah says that God always wants us back; is committed to us. To come back, you don’t have to say a lot of things or do all kinds of stuff. Just give God a new heart. *I will make a new covenant.* If you choose this verse, will you this week look at your commitments? Do your daily choices strengthen or weaken your commitment? What new thing would you do to be closer to

God, your parents, your spouse, your child, those you love?

He learned obedience from what he suffered Spoken by the unknown author of Hebrews, these words remind us that Jesus did suffer, get angry, was frightened and disappointed, felt pain. In all those moments, he kept his heart open, believing that the Father was there. Sometimes we do not know why we suffer; sometimes when we love deeply, we will suffer. But God is always near. *He learned obedience from what he suffered.* If you choose this verse, will you this week, look at your pain whether it be a headache or a heartache? Will you realize that even in tears and pain, you have a choice: close your heart and be angry, bitter, unpleasant. Or open your heart to God?

Sir, we would like to see Jesus When those words were first spoken, many wanted to see Jesus: some out of curiosity, some to sincerely follow, others to test him, still others to kill him. But all who encounter Jesus find that he preaches the same thing: true life and true love are when we give ourselves completely in service to God and forgiveness to others. Love is not about me; it is about us. *Sir, we would like to see Jesus.* If you choose this verse, will you ask yourself this week: do I want to see Jesus; why? To get something, discover something, learn something, be a different person? Do you choose to see him each day in your office, your classroom, your home? Do you choose to let him be seen in you?

I will make a new covenant; He learned obedience from what he suffered; Sir, we would like to see Jesus. Unlike computer games, there are no “do overs” in life. We are responsible for every choice. But the good news, is that we can always begin again, with a new heart, despite past pain, with a new vision. Pick a verse, any verse. Each day think about it, pray on it, speak it aloud, argue with it, understand it. Let it even become repetitive. Let one of these verses guide you, and I promise, the payoff will be big. You might not save the world, but you could just change your own.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

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

March 22, 2015

靈 修 生 活

四 旬 期 第 五 主 日

林 思 川 神 父

經文分析： 若十二 20-36 是若望福音中耶穌最後一次「公開談話」，在談話中出現的關鍵概念如光榮、審判、人子、高舉、光明、黑暗、新生等，都在耶穌和尼苛德摩的談話中(若三 1-21)出現過。由此我們可以看出，這個主日和上一個主日的福音選讀具有內在的關連。

這個故事是耶穌由公開生活到受難故事的過度，整段故事可以分成四段：希臘人來訪(20-22)、耶穌受光榮的時辰(23-28)、審判與人子受高舉(29-33)、抉擇光明(34-36) 並未被納入這個主日的福音選讀中，但顧及經文的整體性，筆者建議信仰團體在感恩禮中也誦念這一段經文。

希臘人來訪： 希臘人--意思是非猶太人--希望見耶穌，他們特地在逾越節期間來到耶路撒冷，由此可知他們大概是所謂的「敬畏天主的人」，意思是指那些對猶太宗教懷有好感，但由於某些因素而未正式皈依猶太教的外邦人。

他們透過斐理和安德求見耶穌，他們兩位是門徒中唯一以希臘名字被稱呼的，這裡大概暗示了後來基督宗教的發展：耶穌復活後，大概是由這兩位門徒率先展開向外邦人傳福音的。

受光榮的時辰：

雖然故事的開始是希臘人求見耶穌，但他們之間並沒有談話。耶穌直接開始啓示祂的死亡，說明祂的死亡是為了使人得到不朽的生命，祂說：「人子受光榮的時辰到了。」耶穌的死亡就是受光榮，因為祂被舉揚而回到父的身邊，並因此成為人們生命的贈予者。

麥子的比喻： 這些語言太過抽象，因此耶穌透過「麥子」的比喻加以解釋。人人都瞭解，種子必須埋藏地底下一段時間，才能結出果實。耶穌的死亡是必要的，否則的話祂只是獨孤的自己一人，祂的死亡將召喚許多人進入生命。

跟隨耶穌的意義： 耶穌生命所體現的法律，對門徒們也是有效的。他們在現世應該輕看自己的性命，才能得到永遠的生命，每一個門徒都面臨這種抉擇，必須做出自己的決定。跟隨耶穌就是事奉耶穌，這種跟隨具有一個更深的意義：跟隨耶穌就必然會進入祂的苦難命運，門徒既然分享「子」的命運，天父必因此光榮他們。

順從天父的旨意： 然而，面對死亡人人都會懼怕，耶穌也因此感到心神煩亂。但是祂不認為該請求天父救祂脫離這個時辰，因為這個時辰一直在等待著祂，而祂目前正面臨這時辰。為了光榮天主的名，最恰當的祈求便是在服從中接受天父安排的時辰。若望福音一再強調父子的合一，父受光榮同時就是子受光榮，這段福音中天上的聲音便是證實這一點。這個天上來的聲音表達耶穌的祈禱被天父所接納，耶穌的死亡是天父所安排的，因為父要藉此光榮子，就如祂早已因子在世上的工程中光榮了子一樣。

「世界」受到審判： 當時除了希臘人，還有其他群眾在場，這些人誤解了這個奧秘。他們把天上來的聲音或者解釋為打雷聲，或者瞭解為天使對耶穌說話，都表現出他們不知道到底發生了什麼事。然而，這個聲音本來是以他們為對象的！因此耶穌再次解釋其意義：現在就是末世審判的時辰了。審判是針對「下層」的區域，亦即死亡、黑暗、謊言的區域，在若望福音中就是指「世界」。審判要加在此世的首領--撒殫--之上，他是兇手及說謊者，這個世界統治者(若八 44)。他的權力都將被剝奪，人們因此而能找到趨向光明的道路。

人子被高舉： 基督經由十字架而被高舉進入天主的王國。「高舉」和「光榮」是若望福音對「十字架」的詮釋，是二個根本的、同時相互補充的概念。被邪惡奴役的世界，如今藉著基督而得到釋放，祂願意吸引一切人跟隨祂。這個空間性吸引的圖像表達耶穌和得救之人的生命性的關連：祂首先把人吸引到十字架上(高舉)，再超越十字架而進入天國(光榮)。

抉擇光明： 群眾再一次提出的抗議和默西亞的觀念相關(35)，由此看出這些群眾是猶太人。他們祖傳的信仰認為，默西亞要在世上建立永遠的王國(則卅七 25；詠八十九 37)。福音作者所面對的猶太人團體，明顯地深受這個觀念所影響。福音所提出的「人子」基督論和他們傳統的想法相反，根據若望的看法，永遠的救援並不在這世上，這個世界有一個期限，也就是光(基督)還在的時候。經由信仰人們能認識真道，而成為光明之子，誰得到這個光明，便不受黑暗不幸的危害。

耶穌的公開生活結束： 福音最後提到耶穌離去，並把自己隱藏起來，這個提示一方面表示耶穌公開對群眾的教導結束，從今以後祂只私下教導屬於祂的人(若十三 1)，另一方面也顯示苦難與死亡已迫在眉睫。

綜合： 這段經文給予我們多重的啓發：基督就是「麥子」，應該被殺害而產生數倍的果實；不信的猶太人殺害了祂，祂卻復活而使更多的人信仰祂。就倫理的教導而言，耶穌的命運就是門徒的命運，耶穌服從地接受祂的「時辰」，門徒也應該跟隨祂。此外，今天的福音也幫助人們從錯誤的想像中釋放出來，瞭解默西亞並非只是一個現界的光榮君王，祂走真光，是我們救援的基礎，人們必須在信仰中把握光明，不要錯失光明的機會。 摘自「教友生活周刊」