

Beloved in Christ, the basic theme that runs through the readings is **God's infinite love** for His people. In the first reading, the Prophet Jeremiah reminds us of God's love for us: I will place my law within them and **write them it upon their hearts...** I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sins no more (Jer.31: 33-34). This is a God who always forgives us, even as He invites us to return to the right path and to do what is right and just. The Letter to the Hebrews deepens this sense of the Father's love for us in Christ Jesus: Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered. This is a God who loves us so much that He gives us His own Son, who takes on our humanity so that we can share in the divinity of God Himself. The Gospel of John, which we have heard today, has the same theology of Christ's suffering. "**The hour has come** for the Son of man **to be glorified...** and when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself."

God's infinite love and his ever ready desire to draw all to himself can also be seen in the prophecy of Hosea: "How can I give you up, Israel? My heart is troubled within me, and I am moved with compassion, for I am God and not human" (Hos 11:8-9). Out of love, God entered into a new covenant with Israel, different from previous ones that have proven to be unsuccessful. God has decided, therefore, to a new covenant, not a remake of Sinai's, but a qualitatively different one. The radical change is in the newness of the law: no more a set of rules and prohibitions that the partner is required to observe, but an inner dynamism. At Sinai, the Lord had engraved his words on tablets of stone. He now sculpts them in people's heart. For a Jew, the heart is the **seat of the will, passions and courage, knowledge and memory**. All the senses of the body make reference to the heart:

The prophet Jeremiah, as we have heard in our first reading (Jer. 31:31-34), told how God would offer a new covenant because his people had broken the first covenant. God's forgiveness would be the characteristic of the new covenant. The first covenant was written on the two stone tablets, which Moses brought down Mount Sinai (Ex 31:18; 32:15-16). But Jeremiah said the new covenant would be written on our hearts (Jer. 31:33) and everyone would know the Lord (Jer. 31:34). This happens to us when we are baptized. We receive God's life in us through the Holy Spirit in **sanctifying grace**. In the Old Covenant, the Jews received grace, but in the New Covenant, God offers us a superabundance of grace because we receive grace every time we receive the sacraments. Grace means we have God's life in us. Therefore, we are indeed God's sons and daughters since baptism. As Jeremiah predicted, God offered us a new covenant that is written on our hearts with sanctifying grace through the Holy Spirit, and we know the Lord through faith.

In the Gospel, we hear about some Greeks pilgrims who came to Jerusalem for the Passover and wanted to see Jesus. Initially, this desire seems trivial but not to John, because raising Lazarus back to life might have increased their curiosity to see Jesus (Jn. 12:9). In the Gospel of John, the verb "**to see**" is to grasp the intimate of a person. This is its meaning from the prologue of the Gospel. When John says, "We have seen his glory" (Jn. 1:14), he means to affirm his belonging to the group of those who understood who Jesus was. Now, the meaning of the passage becomes clear. The Greeks who want to see Jesus represent the Gentiles. Their spiritual journey is the same as what every person, eager to become a disciple, must fulfill. Their presence served as a ploy to prepare the ground to the topic that he wants to develop. He begins with an image taken from the agricultural world: for the precious ears to germinate in the field it is necessary that the grains disappear in the earth. A hundredfold life can bloom only after their death. The Gospel tells us how Jesus became the source of eternal salvation for us. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit (John 12:24) and when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself (John 12:32). Jesus is that grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died and produced much fruit and that fruit is the life of God in our souls, sanctifying grace. Jesus was foretelling the salvation and grace we would receive through his passion and death. **All grace comes from the cross**, because Jesus was lifted up from the earth. Every time we receive the sacraments, their grace flows to us from Calvary. The Church sees the blood and water **as symbols of the sacraments** - especially the Eucharist and baptism - and that Christ gave us the sacraments from the cross.

Finally, brothers and sisters, today's readings have given us a message of hope. Our God who loves us has written His laws on our hearts, on the seat of our will, passions, courage, knowledge and memory... where we will never forget. Let us do our best to imitate Jesus who accepted death so that all might be saved. Let us try to die to self, forgetting our own comfort in order to help those who need our love and service, so that when He comes again in glory we will be welcomed into His Kingdom. Amen!