



## **Fifth Sunday of Lent** **† Sunday 18th March 2018**

In England and Wales

Cycle of Prayer – Candidates for the Sacraments

Keynote: Called to die to sin, change our lives, and find new life in Christ

### **Prophet Jeremiah 31: 31-34**

This short passage has been described as, ‘one of the most profound and moving passages in the bible’. Through the prophet, the Lord God promises – in contrast with the Old Law written on tablets of stone – that the New Law of God will instead be planted deep in our hearts. ‘*This is my covenant,*’ the Lord God speaks, ‘*deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people.*’ The New Law written in the heart of each one of us doesn’t require expert teachers. Each of us is commanded to follow this Law of God: ‘*Learn to know the Lord! All will know me, the least no less than the greatest – it is the Lord who speaks – since I will forgive their iniquity and never call their sin to mind.*’

**Responsorial Psalm 50 (51)** – A penitential song of sorrow

### **Letter to the Hebrews 5: 7-9**

In a few short words, the author of this passage gets us to the heart of the mystery (event) of salvation. ‘*During his life on earth, Christ offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the One who had the power to save him out of death, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard.*’ Thus Jesus in his humanity, suffering, and in complete obedience, ‘*having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation.*’ Today we are urged to change and transform our own lives in obedience to Christ, and so come to a more perfect living in Christ – for our eternal salvation and freedom.

### **Gospel according to John 12: 20-33**

The evangelist places this ‘epiphany’ – manifestation–event in the few weeks immediately before Jesus, for the last time, enters the city of Jerusalem and comes to his death. The ‘clap of thunder’ that some bystanders heard was recognised by some as the voice of an angel, but Jesus told them: ‘*It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours.*’ The epiphany gives emphasis to the importance of what Jesus is saying. The ‘Greeks’ who come to speak with Jesus, are likely to be Greek speaking Jews from foreign lands, but the term may refer, to the non-Jewish gentile nations, who are also called to faith. There is a hint that there is not much time left. These are the last days, but there is still just time to repent and believe. ‘*Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified,*’ says Jesus ‘*unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest.*’ The reference to the seed dying in the ground may be a common proverb of that time, but it is effective, as it leads us to understand the significance of the death of Jesus and of his ‘being lifted up from the earth’ in the Resurrection. Then Jesus will call people of every nation to himself and the harvest will be great! These are the last days, but there is still just time to repent and believe, and establish the reign of God in one’s own life and in that of others.

© Peter J Harrison 2018

Note: Readings for Year A may be used and the Third Scrutiny of the Elect may take place. Sunday of the Passion of the Lord (Palm Sunday) – † Sunday 25th March.