

# Connecting With the Sunday Readings

## Fifth Sunday in Lent

As we draw closer to the passion and death of Jesus, we are invited to think about why *death* is such an important part of what must happen to Jesus. This is a question that Christians have been asking since Good Friday. So why is it called **Good**? Some reasonable answers have come forth, but because this is a central part of the Mystery of God, there's still more we can learn.

Another part of this question concerns us. Part of the reason for the question of why Jesus must die is connected to our thoughts about our own death. Why does Jesus say that we should take up our cross and follow him? How is this connected with the image of the seed falling into the ground, dying, and then yielding much fruit? Doesn't this indicate that death and life are deeply connected, and are not opposites? So, how is death connected with life? These are serious questions, but as we get closer to Holy Week, the tone (and spirit) of the Church's readings takes on more weight. Heavy questions are good for us.

### A Gospel Word for the Home

#### John 12:20–33

Life is something that we can invest in. We can work hard to make our lives better. In our culture, that might mean making a good living, having power to make important decisions, having freedom to do things we enjoy, or being able to buy what we desire. Mostly, it's about *getting*. We might even include on our "want list" some very good things like a good relationship with God, and eternal life with God.

But the tone of the Gospel reading suggests that making our lives better follows a paradoxical path. The paradox comes when we hear the words of Jesus saying that for us to live we have to die, and for us to receive we have to give. Jesus would have to die before there could be a Resurrection. It is through his death and Resurrection that a new creation begins. Death is not final; it is the passage to the next part: eternal life with God. The seed must die for the fruit to come forth.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

## Parent Survival

Dealing with death is part of every family's life. Some don't think about it, much less discuss it. Some pretend it doesn't happen. Today, that's easier to do since many people die away from home and family. But addressing the reality of death can provide an opportunity to appreciate the preciousness of life, both before and after death. So it can be very enriching for us to consider the meaning of death. Today's Gospel reading suggests an entry into this reflection.

The same can be said about the family that discusses death. Children can be shielded from death all too easily. They don't see people die except on TV, in movies, or in the course of video games. And there the presentation is often unrealistic, numbing or meaningless. When family members, friends and neighbors die, take the opportunity for some heart-to-heart talk about death with your children. Tell them of your hopes and your fears.

## Car or Meal Talk

Take some time to talk about someone who has died that you all know. And say a prayer for them as a way of affirming them in your hearts.

## One-Line Prayer

Dear God,  
Help us to understand that in our giving of our lives to you, we receive a greater portion of life back in return.  
Amen.