

Lectionary readings: Jeremiah 31: 31-34; Psalm 51: 1-12; 1 Peter 1: 3-9; John 12: 20-33 (Fifth Sunday of Lent)

For reflection and prayer

- **Jeremiah 31:** This is a brand new covenant: *'I will be their God; they will be My people.'* The law will be written in their hearts, so they will have first-hand knowledge of God. The slate will be wiped clean, their sins forgotten. And this is our experience today. God lives in us through His Spirit. And it is possible for us to enjoy this close, intimate relationship with God which means that our response to God is one of love, for we are His beloved. So let's reflect on how well we know this God and on how we can deepen our relationship with Him so that we enjoy the intimacy He wants us to have.
- **Psalm 51:** This is a Psalm written by David after he was challenged by Nathan the prophet following his adultery with Bathsheba. God is a God of unfailing love, a God of mercy, so David feels he can approach God and be totally honest with Him. This is our God, a God who is approachable, overflowing in love for us, who will never turn away from us, but will forgive us, set us free from our guilt and fill us with joy. He wants us to radiate love and joy and, through His Spirit, experience strength in our weakness, as we open ourselves to His loving presence. *'Enfold me in the arms of love, and fill me with your Holy Spirit.'* (v11 Psalms for Praying)
- **1 Peter 1:** Jesus' death was followed by resurrection. We don't have to wait till after death to enjoy our

inheritance. Through dying the daily deaths that we can die, we can experience new life here and now. We can know healing and wholeness which is God's desire for us. Just as gold is purified in fire, so our faith becomes real and pure when it has been tested by the experiences of life, good and bad. God is holding out to us mercy, forgiveness, love, joy, new life - a glorious inheritance which He wants us to enjoy here and now.

- **John 12:** *'We want to see Jesus.'* (v21) Let's have that desire this week - to see Jesus in ourselves, in others, in our circumstances, in all the experiences we go through. Jesus goes on to speak of His death and says that unless a grain of wheat dies, it will not sprout and produce a crop. We need to be willing to die a little every day in order to become the true self that God created us to be e.g. die to our ego, to our own agenda, to our selfishness and self-centredness etc. The way to real life is through death, dying to those things in us that prevent the life of God from manifesting itself in us and transforming us.

A prayer

'This is a day of new beginnings, time to remember and move on, time to believe what love is bringing, laying to rest the pain that's gone. For by the life and death of Jesus, love's mighty Spirit, now as then, can make for us a world of difference as faith and hope are born again. Then let us with the Spirit's daring, step from the past and leave behind our disappointment, guilt and grieving, seeking new paths, and sure to find. Christ is alive, and goes before us to show and share what love can do. This is a day of new beginnings - our God is making all things new.'

(CH4 Hymn 526)