

Homily. 5th Sunday in Lent. Year. B. 16/17 March 2024.

By this time next weekend it will be Palm Sunday and we'll have arrived at the beginning of Holy Week. Holy Week is called this because it's the start of the holiest week in the year for Christians like us. We'll walk with Jesus joyfully as he entered Jerusalem to the cheering of the crowds. Soon though we'll hear how the mood changed and his life came under threat. On the evening of Thursday 28th March we'll gather in church to gratefully remember his last supper and our first ever Eucharist. On the afternoon of Friday 29th we'll be in church again to commemorate his death for us and for the world, what we call Good Friday. Then, beginning on Saturday night the 30th March and into Sunday followers of Christ just like us, everywhere around the planet, will rejoice in celebrating his resurrection and our own new life in him.

It's important for us to understand and keep all of this in mind because we have just heard Jesus speak in St. John's gospel of these coming events. We've also heard Jesus praying to God about what was going to happen to him. Jesus called it The Hour of his glory, the right time for him to be lifted up. We know that he was lifted up before us on the Cross. The Cross symbol is placed at the centre of our churches to remind us of his loving sacrifice for us. But, by being lifted up, Jesus also meant that he would be lifted up and exalted by God the Father in his resurrection. This happened too, and it's the source of our hope today.

So then, it's a fair question to ask how you and I get lifted up and exulted by God? Once again Jesus gives us the answer and the way. He says that we have to be like seeds that fall into the ground, are changed and

then sprout anew like fields of wheat. This means letting go of what we want all the time and doing what God wants and what Jesus did. Of course we love our lives and want to care for and protect them. But, do we love others as well and sometimes even more than ourselves?

Most of us would say that we do love our families and children and our friends very much, that we wouldn't want anything bad to happen to them and that we would do all in our power to look after their well being. Well, sometimes this means doing the best by these people even if it inconveniences us. This is what loving means, what letting go of ourselves for others means; helping and serving others even if it comes at a cost to us.

Loving God and doing what God wants is like this, too. It means choosing to act justly, love tenderly and to walk humbly and trustfully every day with God. This is what Jesus did for us. It's what he calls us to do and to be like for each other. It's the only way that we can be drawn to him and be lifted up by him into glory and life. Love and service is the way. Let's ask Jesus to help us to be more like this and more like him every day.