

March 21, 2021

Jeremiah 31:33-34; John 12:20-33

Submitted by Dr. Rosemary Murphy

Today, in God's words to the ancient Israelites we hear one of the most beautiful promises of intimacy in all of literature, "I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33). In many churches today, cantors will lead the hymn "Deep Within" with its moving text: "Deep within I will plant my law, not on stone, but in your heart. Follow me, I will bring you back, you will be my own, and I will be your God." (*Gather*, 2004, GIA Publications, Inc. p. 419) For the Israelites, the heart was not only the bodily organ keeping a human being alive, it was also the mind, the location of thought. In the ancient world, having a law engraved on one's heart would symbolized the closest of relationships with the engraver.

The New Testament model of the most intimate of personal relationships is that of the Father to his only Son bonded by the Spirit of Love. In today's Gospel it is captured in Jesus' words, "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me." (John 12: 26)

In the Gospel verses following this teaching, Jesus predicts that the hour of his death is coming and, even though he is troubled, Jesus reveals his intimacy in speaking directly to his Father. Suffering, death, and resurrection to the glory of his Father is the reason Jesus came into world. Immediately we hear—although the bystanders thought was a clap of thunder or the voice of an angel—the voice of his Father publicly confirming Jesus' words that this is indeed his only Son's purpose and glory. It is through his suffering, death, and resurrection that Jesus draws everyone to himself and to his Father.

On this Fifth Sunday of Lent, let us reflect on our desire to be disciples. We must ask for the grace to be in a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior and with his Father by serving and following Jesus. And, we must expect to suffer. This is our glory; our entry into the most intimate of all love relationships—eternal! Forever!