

V LENT– 21st March 2021

**A GRAIN OF WHEAT FALLS INTO THE GROUND AND DIES, IT REMAINS ALONE;  
BUT IF IT DIES IT BEARS MUCH FRUIT - Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto  
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**John 12,20-33**

*Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.*

*"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.*

Towards the conclusion of today's Gospel, John 12, 28 Jesus asks "*Father, glorify your name.*" and, the evangelist writes "*Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."* Well, the reaction of the people is strange. The evangelist comments "*The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."* How is it possible? God speaks yet some think he is thunder and others an angel? They are the fatal effects of religion, which on the one hand present a God who is far from men, who does not address them directly and needs mediators, so they say "*an angel*" spoke, and on the other hand a God who causes fear, the thunder is frightening . Well, Jesus in his activity and teaching presented a God who is not distant, but near and intimate to man, a God who does not frighten, but takes away fear.

Well, the reaction of the religious authorities to this new image proposal of God , is not one of joy, but of alarm; there was a dramatic meeting of the Sanhedrin, where the high priest said "*If we let him continue , everyone will believe in him.*" There is alarm in the religious authorities and, just before the beginning of today's passage, there are the Pharisees, who are by now disconsolate, who say to each other "*You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.*" ( v,19) Why is this? In every person there is a desire for the fullness of life and people feel in Jesus, in the face of the Father that he presents, the answer to their desire for this and everyone rushes to Jesus. And among these, the evangelist writes , there are some who had gone up for worship, but, instead of going to the temple, they feel attracted to Jesus because in Jesus the fullness of the Father's love is manifested and made visible, and there were also some Greeks; for "Greeks" we

mean foreigners. They do not dare to approach Jesus because they know the Jews' mistrust towards the gentiles, and so they look for one more open minded among the disciples and they find him in Philip, because Philip has a Greek name and therefore it is assumed that he has a more open mentality, and they ask him "*Sir, we wish to see Jesus.*"

But Philip, who had also been so bold when it came to bringing Nathanael to Jesus, this time he hesitates, and who does he ask? Andrew, the other of the disciples who has a Greek name also. This helps us to understand the great difficulty of openness on the part of the community of Jesus towards the world of the gentiles, towards the world of foreigners, the resistance that existed; and together they go to Jesus. Jesus' answer seems to have nothing to do with the question because he says "*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*" Jesus is talking of his death on the cross.

In reality, his response means that because of Jesus' death on the cross that God's love will be seen as universal: a love that is not reserved for a people, for a group, but for all of them who welcome it. That is why the sign with the reasons for death was placed on the cross of Jesus in the three main languages: the local language, Hebrew, the language of the rulers, Latin, and that which was known at that time as universal, the Greek language. God's love is universal.

And Jesus speaks of dying not as a defeat, but as an explosion of life of the individual and he takes an example that everyone can understand: the grain of wheat. Nobody looking at the small grain of wheat, can imagine the energy and the beauty it contains; but to manifest itself it needs the right conditions. Jesus says "*...a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*" In the grain of wheat there is an energy, a force that awaits only the right conditions to free itself and manifest itself in all its fullness. So it is in Jesus and so it is in each of us, death does not destroy. In each of us created in the image and likeness of God there is an energy, a capacity, a force of love that cannot manifest itself in the short and limited period of our existence, however long it may be. Well, when the moment of death arrives, all this energy that is within us is released and manifests itself and transforms us: we were a grain of wheat, we transform into a splendid ear of wheat.