

There have been covenants established between God and humankind throughout time, but each, after initial enthusiasm, have proven impossible to uphold. They begin in a garden followed by Abraham who is given by God to his descendants the whole land of Canaan. Circumcision is evidence of one's subscription to that covenant. On Mount Sinai, the Law is ratified. Images, portray Moses coming off the mountain with two tablets. Commandments one to five on his left and commandments six to ten on his right. But let me paint another image. How about all the commandments written on both tablets. Here's a copy for humanity and here's the copy God retains.

None-the-less, a new covenant again becomes necessary. The same parties are contracted, but the location where this covenant resides is a world away. This covenant, leaves no marks or scars, no tablets of stone and no rainbow behind, but instead is imprinted upon people's hearts. Truly ours is a relentless God, who comes to us when we cannot go to him. Who else would contract with such a fickle partner?

The Son of Man then arrives at the pivotal hour. And Yes, Jesus, Our Grain of Wheat, is spared not even death. Our Lord's physical suffering and death is yet another demonstration of God's relentless pursuit of a partner.

Crowds are gathering in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. They have come from all directions and Jesus is among them. A carnival like anticipation fills the air. And then Jesus speaks of his own death. Linking death with glory! Or should we say humility with exultation?

These pages of John's Gospel flow into what is known as the Book of Glory. To be glorified is in some sense to be extracted from ordinary and raised a higher and more befitting dignity. Still, it is difficult to see much glory, at this juncture in the Gospel. We know in the coming days, Jesus will suffer a brutal death. One that will look more like failure, than anything glorious!

And then Heaven's voice is again heard by the many gathered. Its tones ringing in harmony with words spoken when Jesus himself emerges baptized from the Jordan. We are all spoken into being from the voice of that same Creator. Jesus is God and needs no glory, but this voice is spoken that humankind might come to couple hearts to Jesus.

Mother Church ignites those hearts from the paschal torch with each baptism she confers. The candle is given prominence when welcoming new members into the body of Christ. And, Holy Mother Church places it again, near a white garment, we call a Pall, before returning our bodies to earth and souls to Creator.

Through liturgy the faithful are taught physical mortality is but one phase of eternal life. Truly our brother Jesus does glorify his Father, and our Father, as he himself is raised upon the cross. And Yes, The Father as always is well pleased! The humility of this our Almighty God.

In death, the body is as helpless, as it is in the womb. Christian death is then never very distant from life. They are intrinsically related. This much nature itself teaches. The Gospel metaphor presents a grain of wheat necessarily dying. Only by giving way in death, does this single seed produce future life! We know this well, as soon across Alberta vast fields of wheat, canola and other cereal crops will begin to bloom if it ever stops snowing. Its dazzling beauty, fills us with hope for a bountiful harvest. But first each and every tiny seed must die and be covered with earth.

Jesus speaks now publicly of his impending death. With death all around us, talk of our own death, in this culture, is sometimes pushed aside. We have sensationalized, sterilized, dramatized, and professionalize public discussion around death. We don't even like to hear the word. Frightened, some people choose to stay away from the Church, unable to come to terms with the beauty of a death in Christ.

On Monday we will celebrate the feast of St Joseph patron of Canada and patron saint of a happy death. The death of a believer friends is indeed a beautiful moment, although in no way do I suggest it is easy or painless. It was anything but easy for Jesus as well.

But Lent friends is a time when believers strive to become more pleasing to God? Humbly, Self-emptying through kenosis and dropping off ugly baggage in the Reconciliation depot. Coming to these tables of Word and Eucharist with deeper devotion. Signing ourselves in memory of our baptism. Fulfilling the terms of covenant made in Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, and Holy Orders. Jesus' suffering and crucifixion, we grow to understand, expects we too will die to self, that we might live for others. But in fact, any seed left in the barn, we know produces nothing. Come out of the barn then and sow the seeds of baptism planted in your hearts throughout your marriages, single state, family, this community, and to ends of earth.

Amen