



## Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Jesus said to the Jews: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever keeps my word will never see death." So, the Jews said to him, "Now we are sure that you are possessed. Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? Or the prophets, who died? Who do you make yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is worth nothing; but it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' You do not know him, but I know him. And if I should say that I do not know him, I would be like you a liar. But I do know him, and I keep his word. Abraham your father rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad. So, the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM." So, they picked up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid and went out of the Temple area.

**Introductory Prayer:** Lord, you are life and truth and goodness. You are also peace and mercy. How grateful I am to have this moment to turn to you. Without you I can do nothing good. In fact, when I do good, it is you working through me, despite my failings. Thank you, Lord. Here I am ready to love you more.

**Petition:** May I hear your voice, Lord, and not harden my heart to that which you ask of me today.

**1. The Real Enemy:** Today we find Jesus in animated conversation with the Jews. They seem to discuss the same topic – death — but in fact they refer to two very different understandings of one reality. The Jews speak of death in a material way, whereas

Jesus speaks of it in a spiritual way, with his description of death of far greater consequence than the former. Christ warns us about the gravity of spiritual death, which is the consequence of serious sin. This is why the Church traditionally prays, in the Litany of the Saints, to be freed from *mors perpetua (everlasting death)*, the spiritual death which Jesus warned against. Lent is the time to eradicate all forms of this evil from our lives, especially through the positive practices of prayer, penance and almsgiving.

**2. Only the Spirit Gives Life:** Jesus' interlocutors are never able to penetrate the meaning of his words because they think in a purely material way. Only with a spirit of faith and the aid of the Holy Spirit can we understand the things of God. Today's world is rife with what we could call a spirit of materialism. It looks to material things and values as the solution to everything. But have you noticed how it seems that the more our material wealth and technical capacity grow, the emptier we become on the inside, and the hollower our western culture becomes? Material things are necessary, for we are part matter. But a purely material explanation will never be able to address the deeper needs of the human person. As Christ said: "Only the Spirit gives life" (John 6:63). We must strive to adopt a spiritual or supernatural way of living and see ourselves and our world from this point of view, so as not to become blind to a truth that transcends matter.

**3. Open to a Challenge:** Jesus' challenge to raise the eyes of the heart and soul to a spiritual level is met with fierce opposition. In fact, his listeners want to stone him! Christ always challenges us to go higher. And he does this as a manifestation of his love. How do I respond to this challenge in my own life?

**Conversation with Christ:** You have spoken, Lord, in the silence of my night and your word has engraved your will in my heart. Because you spoke, there is a will in you that I know: It is the will of your commands. I want to fulfill that will, Lord. I want to believe according to your doctrine. To hope according to your promises. To love and live according to your guidance and laws.

**Resolution:** I will foster a more spiritual way of seeing myself, others and the world.