

**An old woman, before she died, called all her relatives and asked them to grant her last two requests. The relatives unanimously agreed and asked the woman what were her last two requests. The woman answered: “Will you allow my right hand, whenever I’ll be inside my coffin, to hold a Bible? This is to remind me of the promises of Christ about eternal life.” The relatives replied with full consent to the request. And the woman continued: “Will you allow also my left hand to hold fork?” The family members were surprised for where in the world could you find a dead person holding a fork inside a coffin. They thought that she was just hungry when the old woman asked them: “Have you ever been invited to a banquet?” the relatives answered: “Yes, several times, during birthdays, wedding anniversaries and fiestas.” The woman continued: “Which part of the party that the best food is served?” They reflected and finally they answered: “Towards the end of the banquet when dessert is served.” And the old woman asked them again: “And what are you going to use when the dessert is served?” they answered, “A fork.” The woman said: “The same thing with life, the best part is towards the end, not in the beginning, when we will be together with our heavenly Father.”**

**The experience of dying or giving up a part of our own self, the end result is always rewarding and that reward is eternal life.**

**This dying to self or to put it in another way, unless we die to our own will, we cannot bear fruit for God is what Jesus is**

telling us in today's gospel.

Concretely, what does all this dying to self or dying to our own will mean for you and me everyday of our lives? It means dying to our pride and ask for help; admitting our problem and seeking help from others and God; forgiving the person from our hearts and treating her/him with love once again. I remember somebody who said: "We ask for health that we might do greater things but he gives infirmity that we might do better things. We ask for riches that we might be happy but he gives poverty that we might be wise."

As Jesus' impending death was approaching, His close followers could not understand why He would suffer terribly and die.

In order to help them understand, Jesus related a simple little parable: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit."

Jesus was telling them that His death was absolutely necessary if there was to be a new life. It is a law of sacrifice that one can come to a greater life only by dying to a lesser one.

He was telling them that God works through a process of suffering-dying-rising-from-death. Jesus compares Himself to a seed. He had to die and be buried in the earth for three days, then on Easter Sunday, rise glorious.

This law of sacrifice is exemplified by the fruitful deaths of martyrs and heroes.

In our personal growth, there has to be a dying to our pride, selfishness, laziness, and other bad traits in order to attain a

**better life. For instance, unless a leader dies to his selfishness and greed, he cannot produce the fruits of economic progress for his people.**

**There was a young married man who was given to drinking. His drinking buddies took more of his time than his family. As he sank deeper, his wife couldn't bear the burden of supporting the family and still care for a problematic husband. She decided to go home to her parents along with her kids.**

**The loss of the wife and children proved to be a traumatic experience for the husband. He took the long, arduous road of rehabilitating himself, and with lots of support from friends, he got reunited with his wife and children. They have now become an exemplary family.**

**It was the husband's DYING to his pride and vice that made him rise to a new and better life. There has to be a dying to our old traits and negative forms of behavior before we can rise to a better life.**

**What are those vices and weaknesses we must die to? Is it excessive drinking, the inclination to gossip, uncontrolled anger, pride, selfishness?**

**Like that repentant husband, if we die to ourselves, no doubt we will experience a joyful resurrection, a new and more meaningful life.**