



## **FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT – MARCH 17, 2024**

Jeremiah 31:31-24    Hebrews 5:7-9    John 12:20-33

Story: A public sinner was excommunicated from a local church and forbidden entry into that church. He wailed his woes to God saying, "They won't let me in, God, because I am a sinner." And God answered back, "What are you complaining about? They won't let me in either!"

The religious leaders of Jesus' time don't want to let him in either. In fact, they want him dead.

In today's gospel, Jesus is feeling the pressure and knows he has to face his own death and states to all of us, "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit."

We know his death produced abundant fruit and we are part of that fruit.

Another great example of this process taking place in one's life – besides Jesus, of course – is St. Patrick whose feast is celebrated on March 17<sup>th</sup>, which is the day he died in 461.

He is the patron saint of Ireland, but he is not Irish. He came as a missionary to Ireland.

St. Patrick is a great example of a grain of wheat dying and producing much fruit. Born in England, he was kidnapped by Irish pirates and sold into slavery when he was 16. He learned the language in Ireland and saw the culture of a pagan religion through the people known as Druids.

He was not a great believer of Jesus at all when kidnapped, but while a slave he began to pray and read Scripture. He was a slave for six years before he escaped.

Back in England, he studied for priesthood, became a priest and eventually a bishop. In a vision, he felt called to be a missionary to Ireland.

The grain of wheat that had to die for St. Patrick was his resentment to the Irish pirates and the people that he was a slave.

Over time he let that resentment die. He returned to the nation where he was a slave to be a missionary for the Lord and he produced great fruit in Ireland and still does to this day.

He served there for 30 years before he died. Many people let the Lord in over those 30 years.

St. Patrick believed the Lord was always near with him in his missionary work, even when he was persecuted and imprisoned.

Knowing the Lord is always near can help us turn that grain of wheat that needs to die in us, so it can produce good fruit.

What is holding us back from being the best-version of ourselves?

Prayer: Always Near