



Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (Jn 12:24).

April 2014: Reflection

Jesus uses an example from the law of the nature to bring home the essence of a fruitful life. He was referring to His own life, the way in which He would give life to the world. In other words, how He would accomplish the mission entrusted to him by the Father. The very purpose of the life of Jesus on earth was "that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). Elsewhere, the purpose of His coming to the world is made vivid: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

A process of death is inevitable to bring forth life. This must have been very clear in the mind of Jesus as he shared the last supper with His disciples. During the meal Jesus took the loaf of bread, and after blessing he broke it, gave it to his disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:26-28). Jesus becomes that grain of wheat that falls into the earth and dies, His incarnation and death; consequently He bears much fruit through his new life, the resurrection. In the words of St. Paul: "What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable" (1 Cor 15:42).

The very purpose of Christian life on earth is to share this life of Christ we have received in baptism with others. There is no other way, other than the way our Master has set before us. It is fitting therefore, that initiation to Christian life (baptism) is a dying to the sinful man and rising to a new life. "We have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4). Jesus constantly reminded his disciples/followers regarding the price they have to pay, the death they have to embrace, in being a true disciple/follower of him. "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Mk 8:34). Jesus warned his disciples/followers that "those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it" (Mk 8:35; Mt 10:39; Jn 12:25). Embracing this discipleship St. Paul could say: "For to me, living is Christ and dying is a gain" (Phil 1:21). St. Ignatius of Antioch (died ca. 107) was convinced of this fact when he said "I am the wheat of God. I must be ground by the teeth of wild beasts to become the pure bread of Christ."

There are several Jesus Youth, who silently embrace this process of death in order to give life. Fr. Cheriyan Nereveetil, (Spiritual Director, Jesus Youth India) who recently (4 March 2014) donated his kidney to Rincy presented a new life (hope) to her. A Jesus Youth couple who discerned against the counsel of their doctors and decided not to terminate their fifth child, even at the risk of the mother's life were choosing to follow Christ through a process of dying. A number of professionally well qualified Jesus Youth leaders who choose to serve the Movement and the Church, sacrificing a huge salary and all other facilities, go through a process of dying, giving life to several others. Moreover, there are several Jesus Youth members who daily make a personal choice of dying to the self in small and big ways, thus giving life to their families, team members, councils, Households, etc.

Hopefully this Season of Lent has been 'a time for a breakthrough' or several 'breakthrough' experiences, wherein there was a process of dying to find a new life within ourselves and/or for others. As we closely prepare for the Passion Week and ensuing Easter Season, let us focus on the new life that Jesus brings about through his passion, death and resurrection. "Do this in memory of me" at every Eucharistic celebration is a welcome reminder for us to participate in His paschal mystery daily, thus becoming a source of life.