

MONTHLY SPIRITUAL MESSAGE FOR MAY 2011

“I TELL YOU, MOST SOLEMNLY, UNLESS A WHEAT GRAIN FALLS ON THE GROUND AND DIES, IT REMAINS ONLY A SINGLE GRAIN...”

In this reflection I would like to offer you a new image of Jesus, Jesus as the good soil where the seed that drops into this good soil produces a hundred fold.

Jesus asks us to become the seed that when dropped into good soil and watered can produce a good harvest of delicious food. This well known Scripture passage has many interesting features in it. But two stand out as pointers for us on how to become more conformable to the *“image and likeness”* of Jesus. This particular verse also invites us to be still so that Jesus can assist us to produce good fruits.

The first feature is *“to fall”* which becomes an active verb for us, for *‘unless’* we fall into this good soil we *‘remain but a single grain.’* We are asked to be generous to the Lord who beckons us to follow him. Jesus calls us to follow him to the grave to do die unto ourselves as he did. This act of dying with him calls us to die to our selfishness and to live in the power of his Resurrection. To see only his suffering and death is only part of why *‘he became one like us.’* It was out of and for love of us that he became man. To die can be a painful act. Many people are under the mistaken impression that to assist a loved one in dying quickly is an act of mercy. Jesus could have *‘drunk the vinegar mixed with gall’* to help deaden the pain he was enduring, but he choose not to. He wanted to give himself utterly out of love for us *‘so that we could have an example to follow.’* Jesus asks us to look at his Cross and his Rising from the dead and try and see in ourselves the suffering image and likeness of him. If our circumstances are not helpful in attaining to that *‘image and likeness’* we are called to make a true grace-filled act of faith and attempt at becoming like the Lord.

The second feature is to be *‘buried’* covered up completely by our cold hard suffering but also united to Christ’s sufferings. Why does suffering hurt so much? Because it is a message that something is wrong within us. It can be a mental or physical suffering. Now suffering is also a lack of a good. But suffering is not bad in itself. At times we do everything we can to avoid

suffering. If suffering has no meaning, then it most likely does not have any reason, purpose, or direction, it is completely useless and deserves to be gotten rid of. The old philosophical axiom still holds true, *“Do follows be...”* If we never want to suffer how can we then become like Jesus? Jesus calls to *‘carry our cross’* after him otherwise we have little in common with him. To become a seed that will produce a good harvest we have to allow the operation of the Holy Spirit and the good soil to cover us up completely. To allow this good soil and the Spirit to work this miracle to rid us of that venomous poison that destroys that *‘image’* of Jesus in us. Jesus removes that venom of sin, guilt and shame through the power of his Resurrection and the Father restores in us all he intended us to have and to be, more like his Son.

Allow me to digress for a moment. Not long after my ordination to the priesthood, I was called into a hospital where a good friend of mine was watching her son Daniel, who had been literally crushed in a car accident. Most of his vital organs were severely damaged and he was not expected to see the night through. I anointed him and sat with his mother for a while. Two days later his condition worsened and I was called in again. Meanwhile, one of the attending nurses asked the mother *“why don’t you put your son out of his misery he hasn’t much longer to live?”* The mother asked the nurse, *“Are you married?”* The nurse replied, *“No.”* The mother replied, *“I suffered too much to bring this child into this world. I want to be with him when he opens his eyes to tell him how much I love him and will be with him during his suffering and full recuperation.”* That is how much our Father loves and more. The Father heard and watched Jesus accept the will of some of the Jewish leaders and people who wanted Jesus to die. But Jesus chose not to object but did his Father’s will. The Father never abandoned Jesus even in his most bitter suffering therefore, he will never abandon us. *“Go and do the same yourselves...”*

Fr. John Spiteri OfmCap National Spiritual Assistant.

Regional Ministers are requested to distribute this monthly spiritual message to all local Fraternities in the Regional Fraternity.