

Cycle B 5th Sunday of Lent
Sunday March 18th, 2018

The prophet Jeremiah gives us good news today as he speaks words of hope and comfort to the people of Israel. Typically Jeremiah's words are challenging and critical, because the people of Israel were not returning their hearts to God. This passage is easy to remember too! Jeremiah 31:31. He speaks these words of hope and comfort, **"The days are coming says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah."** On a practical level this indicated a healing of the division within the people of Israel. **From** the perspective of God this means that there will be a new covenant. We are given an insight into the new covenant when we read a little farther today. **"I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts."** What does this mean??????

In the Old Testament we find the Lord entering into covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. Each covenant event occurred with different individuals, in different times and places. However, the consistent message is, **"I will be your God and you will be my people."** A covenant with God goes like this: **the law of God places demands on our life, and we conform or align our will to the divine life of God.** As you and I know this is easier said than done. We are weak and we need the Lord's help. **The Lord too**, knows that we are weak and in need of His help.

Back to these important words, **“I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts.”** The Law in the Old Testament was written in stone and on parchment, or spoken aloud. Now the Lord is saying He will place the law in us and write it upon our hearts. How can this be? We look to the WORDS and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ at the Last Supper. **“Take this all of you and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant.”** This is the new covenant the Jeremiah was prophesying. He may not have understood it, but the Lord foreknew His saving plan. By taking in the life blood of Jesus the law is being written upon our hearts and we are internalizing the law in a deeper and most significant way. Jesus, life blood is giving us new life in the new covenant. And so who is Jesus? He is not a prophet or some really nice teacher. He is the fulfillment of the law. As we find in St. John’s Gospel, **“The Word became flesh.”** Jesus is the Word, He is the Law. He writes His law upon our hearts through the Holy Eucharist. The early Church fathers would say that when we receive the Holy Eucharist, we are being Eucharistified. This is because we are taking Jesus into our hearts. St. Thomas Aquinas would say that the sacraments especially the Eucharist are the new law. The Second Vatican Council teaches that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life.

The Body and Blood of Christ is our source of strength to live out the Christian life, that is the new covenant; and it is the highest form of Christian worship.

When we say AMEN, and reverently receive the Holy Eucharist, the Lord is writing His Law upon our hearts. This is not some little ritual that we go through each week, No, this is much, much more. This is the Lord's covenant, being written upon our hearts. Our AMEN is our YES to God. Yes to His covenant that Jerimiah prophesized, **“I will make a new covenant,... I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts.”** This happens through the Holy Eucharist!