

REFLECTION FOR 5th SUNDAY OF LENT.

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 5:7-9 John 12:20-33

I was standing on my parents' front porch speaking with one of my grandmothers' best friends. The woman speaking with me had visited several times during my grandmother's last stages of her life on earth. And as we stood on the porch that day, she said to me: " You know, Patrick, this is your grandmother's finest hour.

I hadn't thought about it that way. But yes, even as death was at her door, life was welling up in my grandmother's heart and eternal life was evident in her every word and action.

Who would have thought that such a heart-breaking hour could be her finest hour.

In our Gospel passage today, Jesus declared "the hour has come". A heart-breaking hour that is also his finest hour.

How can this be his finest hour when it's the hour of His passion? The hour of Jesus' glorification is the hour of his suffering and death. The Cross is portrayed in John's Gospel as the moment of revelation, revealing the glory of God's saving love.

So, you see in John's Gospel, we encounter the Son of God who knows that suffering is not as strong as God's love for Him. Jesus knows that the glory of God's love is revealed when we see that God is willing to suffer with us and for us.

Jesus faces a death that is real, but he does so with courage because he knows that eternal life is more real.

Death is near, but this is Jesus's finest hour. And that is crucial for our life and for the life of the world. Why? Because I think that crucifixion is still happening.

Crucifixion is still happening in hospital rooms where someone struggles to breathe.

Crucifixion is still happening wherever uncertainties caused by a virus lead to fear.

Crucifixion is happening wherever economic hardships lead to anxiety.

Crucifixion is happening wherever loneliness leads to suffering.

The crucifixion still happens wherever poverty saps the spirit.

Crucifixion is happening wherever racism breeds hate.

Crucifixion is happening where immorality gets rewarded.

In so many situations we humans are dying. But these experiences can be our finest hour if we let the glory of God be seen. And the glory of God can be seen when frightening circumstances lead people to a greater commitment to love.

The glory of God can be seen when the lonely moments lead us to reach out to others who may be in need.

The glory of God is revealed when a crisis leads to re-examine our relationships and to strengthen our commitment living God or it can happen when someone's mother reacts to a sickness diagnosis with a faith that is awesome.

This is Jesus' hour, His finest hour. The Cross is glory, not dishonour.

In today's Gospel passage again, Jesus uses the image of the grain of wheat going into the ground. He says "Amen, Amen, I say to you, 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".

Jesus is probably speaking about what's going to happen to Him. Jesus will literally go into the ground when he's buried. And by his dying, his burial, and ultimately his rising, he will produce fruit- the community of believers who trust that Jesus has the words of everlasting life.

Jesus says his disciple must follow his example of self-giving. Whoever loves his/her life loses it and whoever hates life in this world will preserve it for eternal life.

Only a life spent for others will be glorified here in this world and in Heaven. We know that the world owes everything to people who have spent their time and talents for God and for their fellow human beings. Mother Teresa, for instance, gave up her comfortable teaching career and began her challenging life for the "poorest of the poor" in the crowded slums of Calcutta. Thus, she became, in the words of the Secretary General of the U.N., "the most powerful woman in the world." We see similar cases in the history of great saints, scientists, and benefactors of mankind, in all walks of life.

Salt delivers its taste by dissolving in water; a candle gives light by having its wick burned and its wax melted. Loving parents sacrifice themselves so that their children can enjoy a better life than they themselves have had. Let us pray for this self-giving spirit, especially during Lent.

While so many others selfishly keep their God-given wealth and talents for themselves, let us learn to live this Lenten period spending our time and talents for others around us by humble, selfless, and self-giving service. John Wesley's advice is apt for us "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can".

Jesus' faith in His Father does not help Him to avoid the troubling experiences of life. Faith gets Him through the troubling experiences of life.

Jesus invites us to look at everything through the lens of the Cross and to unite everything that is happening to us, to what happened to Jesus.

Jesus will teach us how to look at our life, He will teach us to be cross-eyed people. That is people who view every moment through the prism of the cross. Cross-eyed people who see that even our darkest night can become our most glorious hour, thanks to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Fr Patrick