

March 22, 2015 "The Hour" Homily

Brothers and sisters, You may be of an age to remember when one of your favorite television programs was suddenly interrupted by a news bulletin. We heard the following words: "We interrupt this program to bring you breaking news from CBS". The news was usually grave, and never trivial. One example comes to mind: the announcement of President John F. Kennedy's death in November of 1963. As viewers, we were startled. It took several minutes for us to digest the unpleasant news. Sometimes, we wept!

In today's gospel, Jesus interrupts his discourse by making a sudden, unexpected announcement. It is a solemn moment, an unforgettable event. Much to the dismay of his disciples, He announces his imminent death. "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (Jn. 12:16). In John's gospel, "the hour" is a reference to the mystery of His passion, death and resurrection. In an earlier chapter of John's gospel, Jesus informed his mother at a wedding feast that his hour had not yet come (Jn. 2). Jesus is prepared to lay down his life.

In the fourth gospel Jesus takes leave of this world with incomparable dignity. He dies serenely; majestically. His mission has been fulfilled. In the 17th Chapter, Jesus prays to his Heavenly Father: "I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do" (Jn.17:4). Love must have the final word. Hanging on the cross, Jesus cries, "It is finished" (Jn.19:30).

So often in life we look forward with eager anticipation to joyful announcements. Consider a couple announcing their engagement to be married or a young woman announcing the college of her choice. But the announcement of a terminal illness or a sudden death is likely to result in sadness and an overflow of tears. "And I, once I am lifted up from earth, will draw all men to myself" (Jn.12:32).

To quote the late folk singer, Woody Guthrie, we are on a train "bound for glory". For us, the faithful, death will be our glorification, our exaltation. Our life will be brought to completion. Like Our Blessed Lord, we, too, will be "lifted up". And by our example, we shall draw others to our crucified and risen Lord.

Amen!