



Some reflections inspired by online copyrighted commentaries and homilies

## March 21, 2021 Fifth Sunday of Lent

Your mother has been sick in the hospital briefly. Your phone rings, and you are in study hall, it rings again and a third time and a fourth, back-to-back, that funny feeling begins to come over you. Unusual, you think, no one never calls me at this time of day and that many times. But when you answer, you find out why. She has passed away. Your mother, now in her mid 60's, has just been called to glory. Even though details are not yet clear, already you can see before you days of grief and pain, of family meetings, consultation with making arrangements and a final goodbye and you left behind. In a moment, your life has changed drastically. It all began with that phone call.

You are having dinner with the person you love. You've been dating now for two years, and you are convinced that the two of you are growing closer. You have even considered whether it was time to bring up the topic of a permanent relationship. At dinner they seem distracted. Halfway through the meal, those proverbial words resound, "We need to talk." Your heart skips a beat, and your worst fears come true. They are not as content as you are in the relationship. "We should take some time off." By the end of the meal, the earth has shifted beneath you. It was all signaled with those little words, "We need to talk."

We expect stability in our lives, one day constantly flowing into the other. But we all know that there are moments when our life takes a drastic and negative turn. Looking back, we can even remember the phone call or the remark that signaled that change. Now we find ourselves in a room we do not want to be, in a place of fear, doubt, and pain. Our life has been altered to a difficult place. Somehow, by the grace of God, we have to get through it. Our faith kicks in.

Jesus experiences such a change in today's gospel. He knows that his mission is to draw all people to himself. Therefore, when he is told some non-Jews, some Greeks, come asking for him, Jesus sees it as a sign that now is the time to fulfill his mission. The gospel of John tells us Jesus answers the disciples "the hour has come..." The hour is frightening, because it is the hour of his death. His life is about to change drastically. But the important thing of today's gospel is that Jesus does not call his hour the hour of his death. He calls it the "hour to be glorified." That is because Jesus is committed that in the sudden turn towards suffering that his life has just taken, God the Father will not abandon him. In fact, Jesus dares to believe that, just as a seed that is put in the ground and dies produces much fruit, God is able to bring life out of Jesus's passion and death. Life lost is Life gained.

Our faith centers on the belief that God can produce new life out of the most difficult periods of our lives. This faith does not promise that the journey will be easy, nor does it imply that the pain will be slight. But it spurs us to hope that as we try to put our life back together after the loss of a loved one, or disastrous breakup, we will learn things about ourselves that can deepen us and heal us. God asks us to trust him, as we gaze at the lifeless body of a mother. Grace and strength are found in Christ for the healing and acceptance of the death of the woman who gave us birth. For Jesus says, "when I am lifted up from this earth, I will draw everyone to myself". Our life does not always move from a blessing to a blessing. This is why today's gospel assures us that when our life takes a sudden turn towards loss and suffering, we should not give up hope. Like Jesus we believe that our God is with us. And because God is with us, we are not lost in our pain, but our hour of suffering can become our hour of God's glory.