

Fifth Sunday of Lent 3/21/2021

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The ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates, devoted his life to fighting ignorance and hypocrisy in his native Athens. He challenged belief in the **capricious** Olympian god's ... as well as the corrupt rulers of his city-state. He taught a code of virtue, justice and piety and ... he developed a huge following. But ... his teachings were perceived as a **threat** to those in power so ... he was arrested, tried ... and ... charged with false teaching and corrupting youth ... he was sentenced to death by being forced to drink hemlock. Subsequent generations of Greeks came to regard Socrates as a martyr for truth and tolerance ... and they resolved never again to persecute anyone because of their beliefs. And even though there were some notable exceptions ... by the time of Jesus ... some 400 years later ... the Greeks were generally considered to be a very open-minded people. Many religious and philosophical traditions flourished among them.

Our Gospel tells us that some Greeks had come to Jerusalem to worship at the Passover feast. They were probably Greek converts to Judaism. I doubt they were seeking a new religion. The Greeks already had **plenty** of those! Perhaps they had heard of the many miracles Jesus had worked, or ... since our Gospel reading is set immediately **after** ... the triumphal entry into Jerusalem ... perhaps they were impressed and perplexed by the crowd's adulation. St. John merely tells us: that they "came to Philip ... and asked him, 'Sir, we would like to see Jesus.'" Then ... they are mentioned no more. St. John is certainly capable of being quite cryptic in his writing ... but ... what he does **not** do is give us useless information. So why does he tell us about these Greeks? The answer ... I think ... lies in the Jesus' **response**.

Twice before ... in John's Gospel ... Jesus had been asked to do something that would reveal Himself ... by His mother at the wedding at Cana and by His disciples before the Feast of Tabernacles. Both times He had said: "My hour has **not** yet come." But this time ... His answer is **very** different: "The hour **has** come for the Son of Man to be glorified." It seems as if the appearance of these Greeks ... is the **catalyst** for a change of direction. Many times in the Gospels Jesus had indicated that He had come **only** to the "lost sheep of the House of Israel." ... But **now**, God

is doing something **new**. Now, His **revealing** himself ... **just** to ... and through the Jews ... is over. His mission is for **all** ... no **longer** for the Jews alone. He says: "I will draw **everyone** ... to myself." In the words of St. Paul: "He became the source of eternal salvation for **all** ... who obey him." And He chooses the appearance of these Greeks ... representing **all** humanity for all **time** ... to announce that ... finally ... the **time** ... is now. The hour of His **glorification** ... is now at hand!

But this glorification is not to look like **anything** we might **expect**. Certainly ... when someone is **glorified** ... they are indeed **lifted up** ... but **not** on a cross ... **not humiliated** and **executed** ... as a criminal. Being **glorified** ... does **not** usually involve being condemned or killed! ... But Jesus glorification is different. It **demand**ed His death as He explained with the metaphor of the grain of wheat. For **without** death ... there can **be** no resurrection! And the fruits ... of this ... **dying**? No less than our **Salvation** ... yours ... mine ... **all** humanity ... for all time!

And our own glorification requires the same ... **over** and over again! In baptism we died to sin and were reborn in grace! But now we must **die** again ... daily ... to the hundreds of sinful temptations our world offers ... if we are to experience the joy of eternal life with our Lord. Jesus tells the Greeks ... and us ... Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. But it is so **very** easy to become enamored with the things ... this world has to offer us ... to become complacent ... satisfied. And **if** ... we have it all here ... might we **not** ... be tempted ... as so many are ... to say: **Paradise is here ... there is no more?** ... But one thing is certain. We **will** ... all die. And when that time comes ... what will our last **thoughts** be? Will they be of sorrow and despair for all I am about to lose ... or will they be of peace and true joy ... in anticipation ... of a new life ... for eternity with our God!