Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Gospel text (*Jn* 7:1-2, 10, 25-30): Jesus moved about within Galilee; he did not wish to travel in Judea, because the Jews were trying to kill him. But the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was near. But when his brothers had gone up to the feast, he himself also went up, not openly but as it were in secret.

Some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem said, "Is he not the one they are trying to kill? And look, he is speaking openly and they say nothing to him. Could the authorities have realized that he is the Christ? But we know where he is from. When the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from." So Jesus cried out in the temple area as he was teaching and said, "You know me and also know where I am from. Yet I did not come on my own, but the one who sent me, whom you do not know, is true. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me." So they tried to arrest him, but no one laid a hand upon him, because his hour had not yet come.

"His hour had not yet come"

Fr. Matthew J. ALBRIGHT
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Today's Gospel allows us to contemplate the confusion that arose over the identity and mission of Jesus Christ. As the people come face to face with Jesus, there are misunderstandings and presumptions about who He is, how He will or will not fulfill the Old Testament prophecies and what He will accomplish. Assumptions and judgments lead to frustration and anger. So it is in every age: confusion over faith in Christ and Church teaching sparks controversy and religious disintegration. The flock is scattered if the sheep do not know their shepherd.

The people say: "We know where this man comes from; but when the Christ appears, no one will know where He comes from" (Jn 7:27) and conclude that Jesus cannot be the Messiah because He does not fit the description of "Messiah" that they have been taught. On the other hand, they know that the Chief Priests want Him dead but can see that He is walking about freely without being arrested, so they wonder "Can it be that the rulers know that this is really the Christ?" (Jn 7:26).

Jesus cuts through the confusion by identifying Himself as "sent by the One who is true" (cf. Jn 7:28). He is in charge of the situation, as He is portrayed by John, and no one touches Him because the time has not yet come for Him to fully reveal His identity and mission. Jesus defies expectations by showing Himself to

be, not a conquering leader overthrowing Roman oppression but the Suffering Servant of Isaiah.

Pope Francis wrote in “Evangelii Gaudium”: “The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.” It is critical that we help everyone we meet to get beyond presumptions and judgments about who Jesus is and what the Church is and facilitate for them an encounter with Jesus. When a person comes to know who Jesus really is, joy and peace abound.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “To seek Jesus is often something good, for it is the same as to seek the Word, the truth and wisdom. So long as we keep the seed of truth that has been placed in our soul, and his commandments, the Word will not distance himself from us.” (Origen)

- “Freedom is not the ability simply to do what I want. This makes us self-centred and aloof, and it prevents us from being open and sincere friends. Instead, freedom is the gift of being able to choose the good: this is true freedom.” (Francis)

- “Like the prophets before him Jesus expressed the deepest respect for the Temple in Jerusalem. It was in the Temple that Joseph and Mary presented him forty days after his birth. At the age of twelve he decided to remain in the Temple to remind his parents that he must be about his Father's business. He went there each year during his hidden life at least for Passover. His public ministry itself was patterned by his pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the great Jewish feasts.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 583)

Other comments

“His hour had not yet come”

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Today, evangelist John tells us that Jesus' time “had not yet come” (Jn 7:30). He is referring to the hour of the Cross, to the precise and precious time of His submission for the sins of the entire Humankind. His time has not yet come, but it is getting very close. It will be Good Friday when our Lord will bring to its end His Celestial Father's will, while feeling —as Cardinal Wojtyla wrote— all “the burden of that hour, when the Servant of Yahweh must accomplish Isaiah's prophecy, by pronouncing His ‘Yes’ ”.

Christ —in His continuous priestly longing— spoke many times about this definite and determining hour (Mt 26:45; Mk 14:35; Lk 22:53; Jn 7:30; 12:27; 17:1). The Lord's life will be completely dominated by the supreme hour and He will long for it with all His heart: “There is a baptism with which I must be baptized

and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!" (Lk 12:50). And "Before the feast of Passover,* Jesus knew that His hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved His own in the world and He loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1). That Friday, our Redeemer shall hand over into the Father's hands His spirit and, as of that moment, His mission already completed shall become the mission of the Church and of all its members, pushed by the Holy Spirit.

After Gethsemane, after His death on the Cross and His Resurrection, the life initiated by Jesus "underlies all history" (Catechism of the Church, n. 1165). Life, work, prayer, Christ's submission is being now made present in His Church: it is also the hour of the Lord's Body; His hour becomes our hour, the time to join Him in the prayer of Gethsemane, "always awake —as Pascal asserted— by His side, in His agony, till the end of time". It is the hour to act as living members of Christ. This is why "The prayer of the Hour of Jesus always remains His own, just as His Passion 'once for all' remains ever present in the liturgy of His Church" (Catechism of the Church, n. 2746).