

[Readings: Jer. 31:31-34; Psalm 51; Heb 5:7-9; John 12:20-33]

“We would like to see Jesus.”

How do YOU define prayer? Is it merely talking to God, or is it talking to God AND listening to God, and then reflecting on God’s word and work in our lives? According to the ancient Jewish rabbis, there were three kinds of prayer. The first level was simple prayer, made in silence. The second kind of prayer was called “crying out.” You can hear the prayer of crying out. You see it in the news videos from the Middle East recording a scene of violence and death. People waving their hands and crying out in grief, frustration and anger.

The third kind of prayer according to traditional Jews is simply, “tears.” This kind of prayer is open, holy, honest “venting” before God. That is why the so-called “Agony in the Garden” is so significant for Jesus. He moves from inner, silent prayer to crying out loud, to tears which come so fiercely from within him that they become drops of blood. Jesus knew how to pray! He prayed, He cried out in desperation. He cried tears of blood, utterly vulnerable before His Father. A prayer mixed with love and faith.

Next to the precious gifts of love and faith, *time* is another great and precious commodity. Is it the right *time* to say or do this? Is it the wrong *time*? Has *time* run out? How much *time* do we have left?

Jesus Christ was very much aware of time, and the proper time. St. John tells us in his Gospel that at the right precise moment, the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. He speaks of “my hour” and “not my hour.”

Time is understood in the Bible in two ways. The first way is to think of time as linear. The Greek word for this concept is *CHRONOS*. This is the linear measure of time. It has a beginning point, a line of actions and events, and an end-point, or an arrow indicating infinity. We get the word “chronology” from *chronos*. This is how we measure history, science and our individual lives.

The other way of understanding time is called *KAIROS*. This

points to specific moments and events in history and in our individual lives. The time of our birth, marriage, ordination, graduation, promotion, retirement, and death. These are significant and noteworthy moments in the chronology of life.

In John's Gospel, he uses the *Kairos* word often. At the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus says to His Blessed Mother, "My hour (*Kairos*) has not yet come." Today He says, "The hour has come" for the Son of Man to be glorified. The word "glorified" in the New Testament, "*doxa*" means the very glory of God, God's presence. How does that presence of God take place? As we will see, through the death of Jesus. And then through His Resurrection. And ours.

An employee in my last parish and I had an agreement. She would stay on staff until it was the right time to retire. She created a "chronos" while she worked there, a chronology of many years of faithful and conscientious ministry. But when she determined that it was time to retire, she approached me with tears in her eyes and said, "It is *Kairos*." It's time. We cried in each other's arms.

There is one verse in the words of Jesus that follow, which has caused confusion and misinterpretation: "Whoever loves their life loses it, and whoever hates their life in this world will preserve it for eternal life." Does this mean that we should hate our life? When I was in high school and suffering the trials of being a teenager, I said in despair to my mom: "I hate my life. I didn't ask to born!" And she wisely replied, "Neither did I. Welcome to the club!"

We are here because God's love willed us into existence. We are not called to hate our earthly life but to put it into proper perspective, with our eyes focused on eternal life. God comes first, others come second, and we are third.

If we love our earthly life, we know that we lose it in the Lord's service. If we love our earthly life in a selfish way, we just lose whatever we think we have. This process is called "discernment."

The key is to find out through discernment, not what WE want out of life, but what GOD wants for us out of life.

We want to be good and moral people. So we can find some consolation in today's reading from Jeremiah, "I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts." This is how we serve Jesus Christ and follow Him, so that where He is, His servants will also be. And the Father will honor whoever serves Him.

Today and on Tuesday, we celebrate two feasts: St. Patrick today, and St. Joseph on Tuesday. Guess what? St. Patrick was NOT Irish! He was born either in England or in Wales to Italian parents who were diplomats from Rome living in England! How many of you already knew that? A political raid forced Patrick into slavery, where he was sent to Ireland to labor. He escaped, returned to Rome, where he discerned the call to priesthood. In a dream, he heard the voices of the people of Ireland saying, come back home to us. So, he asked to be sent as a missionary to Ireland.

St. Joseph, husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus, discerned HIS life choices to marry his pregnant fiancé, to leave his homeland for Egypt, to return to a quiet life, and to be faithful to His God. Do YOU want to "see Jesus?" Open your eyes, your ears and your heart to the discernment of the Holy Spirit.

Has YOUR "kairos" moment arrived? There are only two more weeks left of this Lent for this year. Is it "time" for you to "hate your life in this world?" Not to wish that you had never been born, but to realize that you were born for a reason, for an amazing and awesome calling and mission? To die in order to rise?

May we learn obedience through discernment from our life's blessings, joys and sufferings, to follow "the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him," and "to see Jesus." In this world and in the next. AMEN!