

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

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, 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.

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 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 be 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.

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.

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." We can approach the task of discernment with the knowledge that the impetus to goodness is within each one of us, just waiting to be nurtured. 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.

The ability to discover that law within our hearts is called discernment, the ability to listen and heed the inner voice of God. Discernment helps us navigate our way through the sometimes conflicting chorus of voices that we can hear within. It allows us to distinguish God's truth from other inner voices prompted by the likes of selfishness, self-absorption, and fear.

Discernment is a sophisticated skill, one that needs to be developed over time through practice. And we can develop this key moral capacity in a number of ways: to listen to our own hearts; to recognize that God's ways are loving ways; to expect an answer, however subtle, when we turn to God; to learn that answers don't always come in obvious ways; to consult with people we know to be wise; and to foster a sense of trust that if we have a sincere heart, we will find our way.

This weekend, we celebrate two feasts: St. Patrick and, on Monday, St. Joseph. Guess what? St. Patrick was NOT Irish! He was born in England to Italian parents who were diplomats from Rome living in England! How many of you already knew that? (3/4 at the 5 PM and 8:30 AM Masses; 1/2 at the 11 AM Mass). A political raid forced Patrick into slavery, where he was sent to Ireland to labor. He escaped, returned to Rome, discerned the call to priesthood, and was 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. 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!