

March 21, 2021 The Hour of Jesus Homily: At one time or another, virtually all of us have seen the news magazine program, *"Sixty Minutes"* on Sunday night. The show dates back to the late Seventies, and continues to be popular with the television viewing public today. Those who have viewed the program are likely not to forget the timepiece featured at the beginning of each program and the unmistakable sound of a ticking clock. One hour later, the show ends and, at least for one week, the clock is silenced.

Evidence of our fascination with the hour, or sixty minutes, are some of the phrases we often hear on a regular basis, such as "happy hour", "rush hour", "witching hour", "the midnight hour" and even "The Hour of Power". Just recently we were instructed to move the hands of our clocks ahead "one hour."

Brothers and sisters, no fewer than three times in today's gospel reading (Jn. 20-33) does Jesus speak openly and solemnly of his "hour". It is worth noting that from the beginning of John's gospel "the hour of Jesus", is mentioned repeatedly. It is surely not without significance that many times we hear Jesus say that His hour has not yet arrived. Indeed, at the Wedding Feast of Cana, Jesus said to his mother, "My hour has not yet come" On two later occasions, it is noted that Jesus could not be arrested because his hour had not yet come.

The hour referenced by Jesus is not "clock time" as we know it, but rather an appointed, designated time, and not sixty minutes. It represents a dramatic change in his life's trajectory!

"Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (Jn. 12:12:23)

The whole life of Jesus is directed to this hour, which will be the high point of his life and the stirring climax of his mission. The "hour" means that His Passion is about to commence. His death is imminent. But, unlike the other three gospels, it will not be an "hour of darkness" but rather the hour of His elevation and exaltation. He will freely lay down His life for us. From the height of the Cross, He will draw all people to Himself. (Jn. 12:32)

In the previous chapter of John's gospel, chapter eleven, Jesus raised his friend Lazarus, from the dead. Alarmed, some Jewish leaders then conspire to have Jesus killed. They, perhaps unwittingly, set in motion the Passion and death of Jesus Christ.

In his book on the Passion Narratives, the erstwhile Pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI clarifies for his readers the essence of the hour of Jesus. "First, it is the hour of his departure. Jesus will soon return to His Father; and second, it is the hour of the love Jesus has for each one of us." "He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end". (Jn.13:1) On the Cross Jesus will utter his last words: "It is finished". (Jn. 19:33)

Jesus' hour does not belong to Him alone. It is true of his disciples as well. At a time known only to the Lord our hour will come, too.

Will it be an hour of triumph or tragedy?

At the present time, one of our diocesan priests is dying in a nursing home. Over the years he has distinguished himself as a pastor, the chancellor of the diocese and the Director of the Propagation of

the Faith. I imagine many of his former parishioners are distressed by his illness and are praying for him daily. His last moments on earth may be a time of darkness. But, from another angle, it just may be that his last moment in this life will be his hour of glory!

He has fulfilled his mission entrusted to him by Christ, and can be consoled by the words of Christ in today's gospel: "The Father will honor whoever serves me." As in the Gospel of John, death can be the hour of glory, exaltation and triumph. With a sigh of relief he can repeat the words of his Master, "It is finished".

Amen!