

For nearly three (1992-1995) years I celebrated daily mass for a cloistered community of Carmelite nuns in the inner city of Schenectady. Upon entering the monastery I was accustomed to seeing a clock on a wall with a sign next to it which said, "A little while and it will be eternity". There was also the unmistakable sound of the clock's ticking. It had the effect of breaking the silence of the holy place.. It is said that Saint Teresa of Avila, a sixteenth century Carmelite nun and reformer, sometimes used to watch the clock and remark that her only consolation in life was to realize that each passing moment she was closer to eternity.

Saint Augustine thought that the only real joy was the hope of eternal life.

Many of us are familiar with the adage, "Time flies". In one of the Psalms of the Old Testament, the thirty-ninth, the poet acknowledges the brevity of human life:

"Lord, you have shown me my end. How short is the length of my days.

Now I know how fleeting is my life. You have given me a short span of days. My life is as nothing in your sight

A mere breath, the man who stood so firm

A mere shadow, the man passing by

A mere breath, the riches he hoards".

All things are passing in this life; only heaven lasts.

Because of Christ, death has a positive meaning. The sadness of death gives way to the bright promise of immortality. In the funeral liturgy, one of the prayers recited by the priest is "When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death, we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven".

The hour of death can be one of the sublime moments of life. Why? Because we are soon to meet Christ.

Saint Paul desired death. He said, "My desire is to depart this life and be with Christ".

Today, we mourn the passing of one who, as a baptized Christian, belonged to Christ.

May God grant him a merciful judgment.

When our hour comes, the hour of our death, let us pray that we shall be reunited with our dearly departed friend in heaven.