

Tuesday of the Seventh Week of Easter May 26th

READING: John 17:1-11

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

‘I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

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## **REFLECTION**

Jesus concludes a long discourse with his disciples with a prayer. In John's hands, Jesus' great prayer is narrated as Jesus enters the "hour" of suffering and defeat. That, of course, is the great victory, but if we are hearing this for the first time we don't know that. And Jesus anchors his prayer in awareness of his union with the Creator-Father.

But here Jesus recognizes that his relationship with the one he calls Abba, (though John has him address God as "*pater*," more gender specific) is different to ours. It is one time we almost need to speak of a transition in Jesus' perspective. His perspective glances, as it were, shifts from his all too human nature, mutable (able to experience physical and emotional pain and thus to change), to the immutable divine nature. (I wouldn't push that suggestion too far: heresy trials have abounded in Church history, and while the presence of two natures in the Incarnate Son is orthodox, any explanation of if and how he transitioned between natures will invite a quick visit to the fires of execution).

So, recognizing that while his forthcoming journey to the depths of non-being is, as Joseph Conrad might have put it, "*horror*" beyond imagining (Matt. 27:46, Psalm 22:1), Jesus also recognizes that the cost for his followers, after the empowerment by the Spirit, will not be a basket of Tim Tams either.

That has hardly been the case for most of us. Yet a glance through history, as I have often mentioned here and elsewhere, reminds us that the cost of following Jesus is often enough martyrdom. I tend often to cite the story of the 21 Libyan martyrs,<sup>1</sup> but the list of those dying for their Christian faith has never stopped growing.

Jesus places all this, his own unimaginable impending horror, and the suffering of his followers thereafter, into the context of glory. "Glory" – without wanting to be too theological about it – is primarily the domain of God. God doesn't belong on a cross; God doesn't belong in suffering. The Hebrew tradition had – has – long produced its martyrs, glorifying God. Jesus senses, perhaps knows, that his own followers will add to that. And in their senseless, crazy, needless deaths for their compassion, their justice, their commitment above all to his name, God will paradoxically be glorified.

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<sup>1</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015\\_kidnapping\\_and\\_beheading\\_of\\_Copts\\_in\\_Libya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_kidnapping_and_beheading_of_Copts_in_Libya). I reflect on their martyrdom and that of other modern martyrs in my *Entertaining Angels*, 129-137.