

Reflection - Tuesday of Holy Week, 2020

- 20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks.
- 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."
- 22 Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.
- 23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
- 24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
- 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.
- 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.
- 27 "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.
- 28 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."
- 29 The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."
- 30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine.
- 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.
- 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."
- 33 He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.
- 34 The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"
- 35 Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going.
- 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.

John 12:20-36

Just before Christmas 1989 the dictator of Romania, Nicolai Ceausescu, and his wife Elena were toppled from power. Addressing the massed ranks of people from their palace balcony in the capital city of Bucharest, they watched with horror and disbelief as the crowd turned against them and began calling for their deaths. They attempted to flee but were caught, subjected to an improvised trial and summarily executed by a makeshift firing squad within hours. The pictures of their bullet-ridden bodies were broadcast around the world. It was a very public demise.

In the final dramatic and traumatic week of Jesus's life the pace quickens. Events overtake everyone except Jesus, the only person to display a kind of synchronicity not with the political conspiracies or the state machinery of the Roman empire, but with the agonizing mystery of his heavenly Father's will.

The coming of the *Greeks*, that is to say non-Jews, with their request to see him, is the sign for Jesus that "his hour has come". These foreigners were in Jerusalem to worship at the Passover festival, so they were honest seekers after the living God of Israel. For some reason unrevealed to us they had made the connection between this God they were trying to get to know and Jesus of Nazareth, whom many were proclaiming as the long-awaited Messiah. All Jerusalem was in a hubbub because of him. Hardly surprising then, perhaps, that the *Greeks* wanted to come and see for themselves whether Jesus was indeed the Saviour, God's Anointed. Whatever these *Greeks* made of him, Jesus recognized them. They were the first of countless "outsiders" from all over the world that would flock to him as the Shepherd of their souls.

What "hour" was Jesus speaking of? The hour of his death, certainly, and this troubles his soul. He does not go serenely to trial, torture and the cross. Nonetheless, Jesus speaks of this primarily as his hour of glory. Despite the gathering forces of evil and darkness swirling around him, Jesus foresees in and through his death a revelation of light that will shine into the darkest corners of creation. Of Jesus's obscure birth John wrote, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (1:5). No less is this true of Jesus's public execution.

Later in that fateful week, Jesus would be praying in the garden of *Gethsemane* on the night of his arrest, which he knew to be imminent. From there it would have been easy to scuttle into the Kidron valley and away over the hills into the Judean wilderness, the classic escape route of deposed kings like David before him. Jesus chose to stay instead. His prayer was not, "Father, save me from this hour" but, "Father, glorify your name", and "Not my will but thine be done".

It was on the cross that Jesus was lifted up. The intention of his accusers and executioners was for him to be made an example. They succeeded, but not as they imagined they would. Instead of dissuading anyone from following him for fear of meeting a similar fate, the outcome was and is that countless disciples down the ages to this day are drawn to worship before that cross on which Jesus died to reconcile the world to God in forgiveness and love. And so we, too, have our opportunity not to love our life and cling to it for all we are worth, but to lose it for Jesus's sake and the sake of the gospel, that others may, like those *Greeks*, come to see and know Jesus for themselves. Like Andrew and Philip, we can introduce them to our beloved friend and master, be that ever so dangerous, as it is in many countries right now.

If we accept Jesus's invitation to walk in this light while we have it, whatever the cost, we will indeed become children of light as he promises to make us, and no darkness can ever overtake us.

Let us pray in conclusion the Prayer before the Crucifix said by St Francis of Assisi:

*Most High and glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of our hearts
and give us a true faith, a certain hope
and a perfect love.
Give us a sense of the divine
and knowledge of yourself,
so that we may do everything
in fulfilment of your holy will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Brother John