

7 Easter A 2017 SML  
JN 17:1-11a

The setting for last Sunday's gospel and this morning's gospel was the Last Supper. In the Upper Room, the air was thick with tension. Judas had just left on Jesus' command, "What you are going to do, do quickly." The Apostles were clueless (John said the Apostles thought Jesus sent Judas to buy more food), while our Blessed Lord was fully aware of all that was about to happen. He knew Judas was laying the groundwork for the Sanhedrin to destroy him. So Jesus thought it best to teach, knowing that in a few hours all would break loose in the garden, and His Passion would begin. So teach He did, and what Jesus taught covers three chapters in John's gospel:

- ✓ Jesus taught them a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.
- ✓ He taught them He would return to His heavenly Father.
- ✓ He taught them He and the Father were one.
- ✓ He taught them of the special bond between His disciples and Him. He taught them, "I am the vine. You are the branches."

- ✓ He taught them the world would hate them.
- ✓ And five times He taught them about how the Holy Spirit will come to:
  - guide them,
  - keep them united,
  - help them
  - and remind them of all that He did and taught.

Then Jesus stopped teaching, he pushed back from the table, got up, walked out into the night air and looked up at the starry sky; He raised His eyes to heaven, and began "to pray at the hour of his death." As you listen to Jesus speak so intimately with His Father, you feel as if you are eavesdropping on a conversation that was meant to be private.

Jesus began his prayer to the Father with "the hour has come." From the very first scene of his public ministry, at the Wedding Feast of Cana, Our Blessed Lord referred to his crucifixion as "the hour." "Woman, how does this concern of yours affect me? 'My hour' has not yet come." And twelve more times, Jesus referred to His crucifixion as "the hour," which tells you that while the tension was thick in the Upper Room, the tension within our Blessed Lord had been building since He

turned water into wine. But despite the tension, the hour of the cross was the hour of glory, as evidenced by Jesus' prayer.

"Father the hour has come. Give glory to your son so that your son may glorify you."

Note John's account of the crucifixion. At the moment of death, Jesus realized that all was completed. Reigning from the cross, He decided the moment of his death. "It is finished." He bowed his head, and he delivered over his spirit. No one took it from Him. Jesus is very much in control.

What for the evangelists Matthew, Mark and Luke was an hour of:

- ✓ darkness,
- ✓ earthquakes,
- ✓ wailing women,
- ✓ and God forsakenness

was for John an hour of glory. If you walk into a Christian gift shop and notice the crucifixes on the wall, the crucifixes where Jesus is dressed in kingly robes and a crown are called Johannine crucifixes, for John portrayed Jesus reigning from the cross; the crucifixion was an hour of glory.

Forty days followed when Our Resurrected Lord appeared:

- ✓ to Mary Magdalene at the tomb (JN 20:11ff)

- ✓ to the eleven in the Upper Room (JN 20:19ff)
- ✓ to the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus (LK 24:13ff)
- ✓ to the eleven when he ate the baked fish in front of them (24:41ff)
- ✓ to seven of the disciples on the shore (JN 21:4ff)
- ✓ and to the Eleven on the mountain when he gave the commission to baptize all the nations; (MT 28:19ff)

After Our Blessed Lord ascended into heaven, the eleven found their way back to Jerusalem along with Our Blessed Mother, and for nine days after the Ascension and before Pentecost, these men were scared to death. The place where they hid was the Upper Room, the exact same room where our Blessed Lord had taught them for three chapters, that first Holy Thursday night.

Added to their confusion was fear, which prompted them to close the doors and bolt them, lest the representatives of the Sanhedrin break in to arrest them. There was also the dread that possibly the people might storm, as they often did, the houses of those who were unpopular. So the doors were shut and the tension was as thick as it was that First Holy

Thursday night. Having seen first hand what their Blessed Lord went through, they now understood His tension, they understood why He:

- ✓ pushed back from the table,
- ✓ got up,
- ✓ walked out into the night air,
- ✓ looked up at the starry sky,
- ✓ raised His eyes to heaven,
- ✓ and prayed at the hour of death.

For nine days, they followed his example and they prayed the very first Novena. For nine days they were scared to death, and they prayed.

Several years ago, my Aunt Sis (my father's sister) died at the age of 87 and after 66 years of marriage. My father is a convert and my Aunt Sis was a staunch Protestant (that's such a Philadelphia thing – staunch – staunch Catholic, a staunch Protestant. Regardless, my Aunt Sis was a living, breathing saint. Never once did I ever hear her say a bad word about anyone. Never once did she gossip. And if you started to gossip, she cut you right off. "I don't want to hear it!" She lived a simple life. She was good to her church, as attested to by

her pastor, her pastor's wife, their daughter and the youth minister from their church, all of whom attended her funeral.

For me, whenever I am at the side of a casket of someone who I KNOW is in heaven, I can pray "at the hour of death" with such connection, with such intimacy to the Father, because I KNOW this person is now in the presence of the Father. For me, with my hand holding the hands of my aunt and praying to the Father, for my uncle and her son who she left behind, and my Dad, and everything and everyone else on my mind and my plate, was an hour of glory, for they were prayers at the hour of death.

As we end the month of May in honor of our Blessed Mother, model our Blessed Lord who prayed at the hour of his death. Is it any wonder that the "Hail Mary" ends, asking our Blessed Mother to do the same: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen."