

**5<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT - B - 2006**  
**“AMDG”**

It had finally come. Jesus first mentioned it when he was about to turn water into wine at Cana in Galilee. Remember? He said somewhat abruptly to his mother, “*What does your concern have to do with me, woman, my hour has not yet come?*” Well, now it has. The mysterious hour that Jesus had been waiting for had at last come. All the pieces of the treacherous plot had now come together, and they pointed directly to the cross. There was no turning back. If loving his people demanded that he die for them, so be it. He had come that they would have life and have it in abundance, and if that meant giving his life for them, so be it. He didn’t like the idea of the suffering that lay ahead, but, in John, there were no pleas for God to let this bloody cup pass him by. To love his people, to reconcile them to his Father, to open for them the possibilities of freedom to enter into life fully was the purpose of his life. It’s why he had become a human being. There was no way he would ever ask his Father to save him from this hour; no way!

In Jesus’ mind, it was the hour when he would be glorified, but even more so, it was the hour when his Father would be glorified, too. It was inevitable, like a seed that must die to bring forth new life, so must he. He knew that his life, as precious and wonderful as it was, was at the service of love. Love was a greater value than his own human life. He was telling us that we live to love. We don’t live to live. And in the loving, even if we lose our lives, we will have lived life to the full, for we will have loved to the end. Jesus had taken his stand. And he asks us to stand with him. He asks all who follow him to take the same stand, to live at the service of love.

The part of this story that has always mystified me was the glory part. How does Jesus' suffering give God glory? It makes the Father look cruel. What father would want his son to suffer so unjustly at the hands of evil? I recall Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* and how much Jesus suffered. Did the Father want that for his son? Of course not! The Father wanted his son to love, no matter what. And he did. He didn't back off. He didn't stop loving, not even his executioners. We aren't redeemed by Jesus suffering, as such. We are redeemed by Jesus' love that never faltered. And in the giving of his life out of love for us, Jesus fulfilled his mission in the world, and in so doing showed his glory and thus gave glory to the Father.

I recall a song sung at the summer Olympics a few years ago. As a montage of pictures showed athletes giving their all in track and field, swimming and such, a woman sang, "*One moment in time.*" It was their moment of glory as athletes. All their preparations had paid off. And they were glorified by the crowds and the media. Well, the cross was Jesus' "*moment in time.*" It all came down to this, and he stood on the side of love, regardless. That was his Olympic event, as it were, and it would be his moment of glory, though this would not be understood until after his resurrection.

But we don't have to be athletes in the Olympics to have our moment in time; when we give glory to God. We were created in God's image to give glory to God by living as healthy human beings. As Ephesians says, "... *we have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of God's glory.*" Just as all creation glorifies God simply by being what it is, a dog, a mountain, a sunset, we humans glorify God by living in right relationship with creation, with other people and with God as Jesus did.

Everything that we do that promotes the fullness of humanity, that builds up relationships based on love and compassion glorifies God. And it doesn't take an Olympic moment to do so. It can happen at any moment of any day in our lives. When we work for justice, to overcome prejudice or hatred, we glorify God. When we lovingly lift someone who is down, depressed, discouraged or poor, we glorify God. Last week I visited a woman in a nursing home. She was barely able to speak, but when she did it was with obvious love. When I asked where she was from, she mentioned her parish in Seattle and spoke with love for her parish priest. She clearly loved her son who never visited her. Her gentle smile and simple faith touched me and gave glory to God.

By the way, bothers and sisters are not exempt from our love, nor are our parents or children. In this context, sin is seen as the absence of praise. Acts that alienate people, like criticism in the home or things that weaken the unity of a family or parish, that do not respect the life of another human being do not give glory to God. I don't care how we try to justify them, if what we do does not give glory to God we have slipped from our mission as followers of Jesus. We are not living as healthy human beings.

Jesus' hour had come. And he gave himself totally to the Father out of love for us. And we renew this wonderful surrender of Jesus to the Father every time we celebrate Eucharist, offer Mass, with one extremely important difference. Because of our baptism, we are now able to stand with Jesus and offer ourselves in union with him to the Father. And in so doing, we renew our commitment to the way of love so we can better fulfill our mission in the world ourselves. Notice: We begin the Eucharistic Prayer by singing in the *Holy, Holy, Holy* that heaven and earth are full of God's glory. All creation gives God glory. And we end it by saying, or singing,

*“Through Him, With Him and In Him,  
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
All glory and honor are yours Almighty Father,  
Forever and ever.*

And our response, our **Great Amen** should be like a standing ovation to the Father for giving us his Son, who fulfilled his mission of love for us. (For us here, it's more of a kneeling ovation.) And to think that Jesus invites us to stand with him at such a moment of glory! Like Mary at the foot of the cross, we not only stand with Him, we also give Glory to God through, with and in Jesus. We even, somehow, bask in that Glory that is God's.

The Jesuits have it right. Their motto is “*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.*” “*All for the greater glory of God.*” It should be ours as well, even our way of life.