

Homily – 7th Sunday of Easter – May 28th 2017

“The hour has come,” Jesus tells us in today’s Gospel. Well, this past week “the hour” finally arrived for the long awaited encounter between the head of our church and the head of our country: the Pope and the President. Actually, it was only a half-hour. And of course, social media was abuzz with stories and jokes about the meeting.

According to a particular late-night comedian, one of the two of them anticipating “the hour” of the meeting said beforehand, “I can’t wait to ask him why he wears that ridiculous thing on his head, all the time,” said the Pope (about the President’s orange hair)! Another comment trending from the pundits was that the Pope said to the President: “Do you want to confess”? And the answer was: “I don’t know anything about Russia.”

But seriously, the hour of the meeting in Rome was a reminder that for human beings of all levels – the hour (the moment, the time, the opportunity) of human (personal) encounter is so important.

Jesus tells us in today’s Gospel that he prays for us – and he prays in us. In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke notes that after the Ascension, the Apostles, with Mary gather in the “upper room” – to pray.

After the terrorist attack this week in Manchester, Queen Elizabeth, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, the Pope, the President and other world leaders – all had the very same response – “our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families.” All people of good will (and even people possessing high political office, publicly) turn to some type of prayer at moments of desperation and sadness.

The Apostles and the early church know that it’s prayer that is going to give them direction in their confusion about where to go from here. And Jesus tells us today to know what time it is (what hour we’re living in) and to have real sense of time – and the times! But, how do we know what time it is? The clock on the wall gives us one answer. Then the moment passes, and we’re obliged to look again for a new answer shortly. The deeper understanding of what time it is comes from *context* — which is hardly written on the wall. Context tells us whether it’s the beginning, middle, or end of a relationship, for example. It tells us whether it’s time to stay or go, to listen or speak, to agree or object, to reap or sow. *This* deeper sense of time requires our full attention; some experience; and not a little wisdom.

The context that Jesus uses faithfully during his ministry for telling time is prayer. Notice how often he goes aside to pray in some lonely place. See how he takes his closest friends up a mountain, or into a grove of trees, to pray with him. This sense of timing allows Jesus to know when it’s the hour. When it’s the hour to slip away from those prepared to kill him — as he did in Nazareth at the synagogue where he delivered his unpopular address to the hometown community.

Attention to context also lets Jesus know when it’s time to deliver himself to the mob coming to get him — as he does in Gethsemane soon after his final supper with his friends. No first-century sundial was ever going to deliver that information. Jesus shows a keen sense of the time, hour by hour. He knows when to have a private dinner with a Pharisee, and when to foil another Pharisee in a public debate. Still more: He knows when to recruit a high-profile Pharisee to become his apostle to the Gentiles.

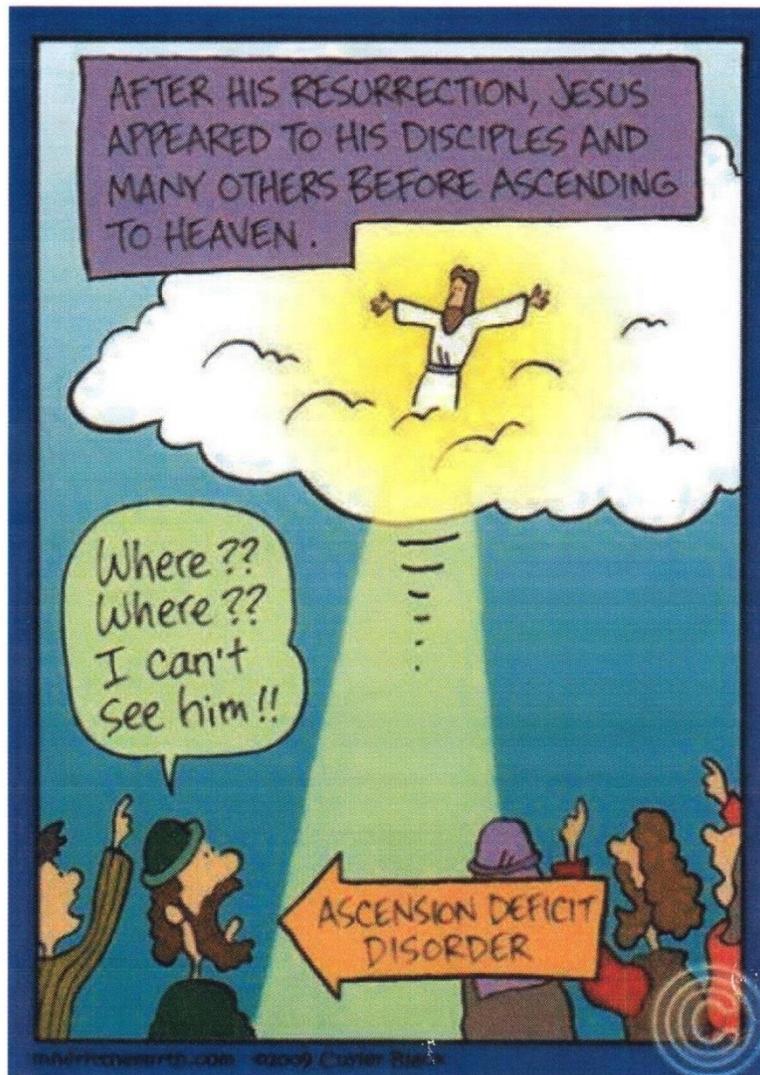
Sometimes Jesus openly taught multitudes of strangers, and at other times He instructed his small circle of friends. At times Jesus worked to exhaustion, and at others he urged his friends to “come away and rest.” There was never a one-size-fits-all approach to delivering the gospel. Sometimes it was important to dot and affirm every letter of the law. Later that same day, an opportunity might arise where the law was an obstacle to an even greater fidelity.

Today is World Communications Day. This year, the pope has asked us communicators to deliver hope and trust in a season of fear and uncertainty. Above all, he's asked us to offer a radically fresh context: to teach hope and trust *in history itself!* History's legacy is often painted as bleak and broken, a tragedy of errors. But, as people of faith, we're affirmed in our belief that God has rescued history and turned it into a story of salvation.

So, this is the true answer to the question: What time is it? Now is the hour that God comes to save us. That's always our spiritual context.

Another context to acknowledge in our "weekly hour" of church is this Memorial Day weekend in which we honor all those who gave their lives for our country – and all those who serve in our Armed Forces protecting the land of the free – because of the brave. The hour has come – to thank all who serve our country. This is also "the hour" in-between the Ascension and Pentecost. That's the "context" where we find ourselves liturgically.

Connect to Ascension → Mission → Don't miss the chance of "the hour" to spread the good news ...
End with ... cartoon → ASCENSION DEFICIT DISORDER ! Etc....



Msgr Frank Caldwell