

I Will Draw Everyone to Myself

Fifth Sunday of Lent

John 12: 20-33

Thomas Aquinas (+1274) gives an amazing commentary on this passage, and I must admit that, in preparing, I mined his great thoughts.

Let us, in cursory fashion, dissect this intense occurrence and discourse. We have a group of gentiles, i.e. non-Jews, who come to the Temple, and their visit is the occasion for Jesus to reveal the mystery of who he is. These Gentiles come to the Temple

- at the time of the feast of the Passover
(when the Jews celebrate delivery from slavery)
- hoping to see Jesus

Why do they come to the Temple?

They are *non*-Jews. It is not their Temple!

Perhaps because the Temple was such a splendor
that it was an honor even for non-Jews to come.

Why do they want to see Jesus?

Well, desire for God results from God attracting us.

As we say in one of the prayers at Mass:

“Our desire to please you is itself your gift.”

They want to see Jesus because Jesus has somehow touched their hearts.

They express their desire to see Jesus, however, *to Phillip*.

Interesting. Why?

Perhaps out of respect for Jesus who was not preaching to non-Jews.

The *apostles* preached to non-Jews.

And so they go to Phillip (which means “mouth of the lantern”) as mediator.

But why Phillip, and not another one of the apostles?

Phillip is mentioned in Acts chapter 8 as the *first* to preach to non-Jews.

Phillip then goes to Andrew.

Also interesting. Why?

Perhaps out of respect for Andrew who became an apostle before him.

They then together go to tell Jesus.

What is Jesus' response?

If I were Jesus, in my excitement, I would probably have said,

“Awesome! Bring them in! Party time! Mission being accomplished.”

What is Jesus' response?

Although initially odd, Jesus

- reads these gentiles
- reveals his Passion
- speaks of the life of those who belong to him

Woven through his discourse is *glory*, the “leitmotif” of his discourse.

Jesus speaks a lot of “glory”.

- “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”
- “Father, glorify your name.”
- “I have glorified it and will glorify it again.”

What is glory?

In a sense, we can say that glory is

- the radiance of God
- the overflow of divine light and love

Jesus precisely comes to communicate

- the glory of God
- divine light and love

In seeing these Gentiles coming,

Jesus says it is time for glory, i.e. for divine light and love to overflow.

In other words, he reads these gentiles

as ready to receive him, the gift of God: “the hour has come”.

He then proceeds to reveal how this will happen.

How does Jesus communicate divine light and love to the gentiles, to *us*?

This is where we are all thrown for a loop.

Jesus speaks of His passion and death, which, as Paul says,

is “a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (I Cor 1:23).

Jesus says that it is in being lifted onto the cross

that he will draw everyone to himself.

To speak of drawing is to make reference to love,

for love draws, love attracts.

At the Cross, Jesus pours forth divine love to overflowing.

It is very difficult around which to wrap our minds, and it is too demanding.
It truly is; which is why we need the eyes of God, we need the gift of faith.
How many people in our world think that the Cross is absurd?
How many of us, on a bad day, think that the Cross is absurd?
Indeed, it escapes human logic.
Death normally brings love to a screeching halt.
At the Cross, God makes use of death to communicate love
—so that death no longer bring love to a screeching halt...

Jesus then proceeds to articulate the demands of the Cross for his friends.
They are to enter into the mystery of it by complete surrender.
To “hate” life is a frighteningly strong way to express complete surrender.

It is only when we unclench our fists and let go
that we can receive this overflow of light and love.
Glory is a *gift*, a gift so far beyond imagining,
and complete surrender is the only way for us to experience it.
When it is given, however, when Jesus communicates divine light and love,
he does so, so generously that we also bear fruit.
We become luminous and loving—even in the midst of struggle.
In fact, suffering can be a particular place of “glory”.

Jesus’ discourse is filled with promise.
Jesus promises this glorious overflow.
“The grain of wheat produces much fruit.”
“The Father will honor whoever serves me.”
“I *will* draw everyone to myself.”

Jeremiah says in the first reading, “The days are coming.”
The days are, in fact, here.
The source of eternal salvation is in our midst.
Let us cry with the psalmist, the most honest of cries

**Cast me not from your presence,
and your Holy Spirit take not from me.
Give me the joy of your salvation,
and a willing spirit sustain in me.**