

Many people see death as an interruption in their life and mission. But Jesus saw death as a fulfillment of his life and mission. We just heard him say, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." The concept of the hour has a deep theological meaning in the entire *Gospel of John*.

- We first come upon this concept at the Wedding Feast of Cana when Jesus says to his Mother, "Woman what concern has this for you or me? My hour has not yet come."
- Next Jesus tells the woman at the well that the hour is coming when people will worship in spirit and in truth.
- Temple officials often tried to arrest Jesus, but they couldn't because his hour had not yet come.
- In today's Gospel Jesus announces that: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.... And what should I say -- 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour".

What is this hour of glory for Jesus? It is his passion and death! His glory was not when he changed water into wine, or multiplied the bread to feed the 5000, or healed the lepers or the blind and the lame. But it is the Passion and death. Why? Because if a grain falls on the ground and dies it yields a rich harvest.

Amy Biehl was a college student in California. She came from a well-to-do family. She dedicated herself to ending racial discrimination in South Africa. While in South Africa, one evening she was driving her three friends to the village of Guguletu. She was stoned and stabbed to death by a mob of angry black militants. Hearing the tragic news, her parents, Linda and Peter Biehl, hired the best attorney in California to fight her case. While in Africa, they decided they had to try to understand their daughter's commitment to South Africa. Linda and Peter Biehl went into the village where Amy's killers had grown up. Seeing the miserable conditions in which the people were living, Linda realized the reason for her daughter's death. "*I can understand how, if you were a youth living in these conditions, you could be stirred up, and you could become violent. I think I can understand that.*"

The Biehls spent much of their time in Guguletu, passing the spot where their daughter was killed. Finally, at the hearing, even though the four youths were convicted for 18 years in prison, they pleaded for amnesty and a lesser punishment. The killers were pardoned and released from prison in 1998 after serving four years. Linda Biehl said that she is not angry. Instead, she said, she feels "a void." "*I think it's important then to fill that void with understanding,*"

To keep her memory alive, they established a nonprofit agency, the [Amy Biehl Foundation](#). With \$500,000 in grants, donations and their own money, they have sponsored welding classes and after-school programs, including music, art and tutorials for those who want to go to college. The Biehls sponsor 15 programs involving thousands of young people, all in Guguletu. The project is widely known in South Africa and admired.

The Biehls have set up a state-of-the-art commercial bakery. It is equipped with \$100,000 worth of mixers, bread molders and ovens, and can produce 6,000 loaves of bread a day. The bakery will offer South Africa needed jobs.

"Christianity sprouted from the blood of Christ. The church is built on the blood of thousands of martyrs. We are here today because God allowed his son Jesus to be crucified so that we might live. It is only through Jesus' submission to an undeserved death that we now have the benefit of faith and salvation. In medieval Europe, the pelican was thought to be particularly attentive to her young, to the point of providing her own blood by wounding her own breast when no other food was available. As a result, the pelican became a symbol of the [Passion of Jesus](#) and of the [Eucharist](#). Have you noticed the pelican engraved on to our tabernacle? A symbol of supreme sacrifice so that we may have life.

But to receive this great gift of God, we need to remember the words of Jesus that we his followers must follow in his steps even unto death. The paradox of the life of Christ, the paradox of self-giving - and then sprouting new life as experienced by the parents of Amy is also the experience of the Christian mediator. *"Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate (spent) their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."* That is his story. That also should be our story.

Who are the important people in our world? Who are the great people in our country? It depends on what you mean by 'greatness.' These are some of the people in our world who receive glory and renown and fame and publicity: - pop stars, sport stars, successful CEO, and billionaires. Our world and our society consider them to be the most important people. Then they are people caring for sick relatives, people suffering without complaining, those giving encouragement to others, those who bring the love of God to others, those who witness to Jesus in small ways, Spending their life for others. Are they the really great people in our world? I think they are.

The first reading from the book of Jeremiah claims that the true nature of God is abundant love and everlasting care. By writing God's nature on our hearts, we say that we belong to God, and that these aspects of God's character are now internal, an inseparable, unremovable part of us. The nature of God, that nature of love, is part of our existence, part of our very being. To remain faithful, we need to die to our selfishness and love our neighbor. Unless a seed falls in the ground and dies it cannot produce anything. It challenges the dominant way of thinking and defining greatness. Real greatness is not visible and external. It's not continual accumulation of stuff. It is measured internally, by what is in our hearts and the actions of love and generosity that flow from that.

As we meditate on the Passion of Christ, let ask ourselves, are we willing to die to ourselves, our passions, our infidelity, so that we may rise to a new life in him.

God Bless you All.