

Time. We make a lot of fuss about time. We say there are not enough hours in the day, we get to work, or the movies on time. Seasons come and seasons pass. Time seems to flow, in only one direction toward birthdays, anniversaries and holidays. Time stops for none of us. We measure time, in minutes, hours, days,.....years.

So it is with Lent, a season in time set aside for prayer, fasting and almsgiving, with this purpose in mind.....to make us more like Christ.

We have passed more than half-way in our journey, and there is change, change in ourselves, and change in our attitudes toward God and neighbor, change in Liturgy. Today, the tone of the readings shifts. There is a greater sense of urgency, an excitement, an anticipation of things to come.

The days are coming, Jeremiah prophesies....., The days are coming when the Lord will make a new covenant with His people, one not written in stone as Moses brought down from Sinai, but in flesh.

He would “**place His law within the hearts of His people, He would write it upon their hearts; He will be their God, and they shall be His people.**” It is a proclamation of hope and promise to a people forced into exile.

The hour has come, Jesus says. The new covenant that God promised to His people through Jeremiah is made in the “hour” of Jesus - in His death, resurrection, and ascension to the Father’s right hand. This is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, made by God with His Chosen people, in time for a time.

The New and Final Covenant would be signed in the Blood of our Savior and ratified in His Resurrection and it will never end.

The prophets said this new covenant would return Israel's exiled tribes from the ends of the world.

Jesus announced His passion would gather the dispersed children of God. But greater still, He promises to draw to Himself, not only Israelites, but all men and women from all nations.

The new covenant is more than a political or national restoration. You see, kingdoms and nations of the Earth come and go. Sometimes they last for centuries, others can be measured in decades, or less. Some are powerful, others frail, some just, others unjust.

Today's Psalm reminds us that the new covenant is a universal **spiritual** restoration. In the "hour" of Jesus, sinners in every nation can return to the Father - to be washed of their guilt and given new hearts to love Him and serve Him.....to love and serve one another.

This Gospel reading brings us ever closer to the cross. Calvary casts its shadow and Jesus is troubled in His agony but He didn't pray to be spared His suffering. Instead, as we hear in today's Epistle, He offered himself to the Father on the cross - as a living prayer and supplication.

In predicting that He will be "lifted up," Jesus is describing His coming crucifixion, but also that He will have an elevation, a Lordship above

all creation. Why? So that **all creation** might be elevated “through Him and with Him and in Him”.

These are familiar words said at every Mass at the elevation, the lifting up before our eyes, of the Body and Blood of Christ, and we respond with a Great Amen.

This hour is now! Jesus’ “hour” continues in the Eucharist, where we join our sacrifices to His, giving God our lives in reverence and obedience, dying to our sin and to ourselves. In this, we too become as a grain of wheat..... formed into bread, as grapes.... into wine. Here we become transformed, configured to the Christ that is lifted up and calling us to Himself. Taste and see that the Lord is good! Let our hearts be drawn to Christ, that He may write His Law of Love upon them to remain for all time.