

Homily for May 25th

At the beginning of John 16 Jesus says to the Apostles.

Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God.

There is a perennial evil in the world. People willing to cause untold suffering and death to others in the name of God. Here Jesus is talking about those who will be killing the Apostles in the name of Yahweh.

We face in our contemporary world another expression of this type of religious cowardice and fanaticism. On Monday evening such barbarity was carried out in Manchester where twenty-two people, attending an Ariana Grande Concert were killed by a man, Salman Abedi, whose twisted views of God and justice resulted in such sorrow in the City of Manchester.

Far too regularly we are hearing of such terrorist activity, inspired by a deeply distorted and violent view of God.

Jesus in today's Gospel speaks to us with clarity about how such violence affects those who are subject to this kind of horror. Here our Lord is describing to the disciples his crucifixion, that will happen on the morrow. What I want to highlight for you today is how the Incarnation of the Son of God brings Jesus so close to those, who like him were killed by people who thought that in carrying out such violence they were serving God. Jesus tells the Apostles:

Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn.

Think of those children today, whose parents in going to pick them up from the concert Monday were killed. Think of all of those who are weeping and mourning due to the emptiness left in their lives because of the violent death of loved ones.

Here Jesus says that the apostles will weep and mourn. This, by the way, is the only place in John's Gospel where the word mourning is found. John wants to highlight for us the intensity of the loss the Apostles are about to experience. Weeping in John's Gospel is always associated with the death of someone, like in John 11 where we are told Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus.

In a world where there are people so calculated in inflicting suffering upon the innocent weeping and mourning can be heard today in Manchester homes. Weeping and mourning have been heard down through the centuries because of innocent suffering.

Jesus affirms for us that there are times for such sorrow. But he also anticipates what the apostles and others will experience on Easter Sunday when he says: "But your pain will turn to joy".

Later in John's Gospel we read the most detailed story of what Jesus meant here in chapter 16.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 12 and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!"

In a world where there is so much weeping and mourning we need to always remember that because of the Resurrection sorrow is turned to joy. Not always now, not this week, not this month, or year and not always even fully in this world. The Resurrection of Jesus not only gives us hope but affirms that violent and distorted views of God cannot silence the merciful, loving God who in Jesus calls us each by name.

It is because Jesus knows what it is to be the victim of a premeditated religious crime that he in turn can speak tenderly to those who like him are the victims of such crimes.

Let us in a moment of silence prayerfully commend the souls of those who died on Monday to our merciful and loving saviour, who knows them by name.