

APRIL 4 2025 FATHER JOHN BERTAO

Thanks be to God I've had many blessings in my life. And I'm also particularly blessed for having had two ladies in my life who I celebrate, one whose birthday I celebrate on this day of April the 4th. Both of them on April the 4th. One of them is a couple of years older than myself, and the other one, a cousin of mine, is trying to catch up to me as far as age is concerned.

Both Mary and Lucy have a hunger to get closer to Jesus in reading Scriptures. Today's first reading from Wisdom is a challenge for both them and, I must admit, for me as well. And I ask you—do you understand? Do you know what the point of this beautiful book of Wisdom is and what the writer is trying to tell us in the first reading?

I refer back to my Universalis commentary that tells us the section—especially this section of the book—and I quote, "The book of Wisdom provokes those who are Godless and reject any idea of life after death, and believe that the world came into being by pure chance."

It continues, * "Where is the just person? Put their trust in God. The just person put their trust in God not in other human beings, as Jesus did all of his earthly life."

And then, in St. John's Gospel today, we hear the famous phrase of Jesus, "My hour has not yet come."

Again, my commentary tells us that this hour of Jesus that He talks about—provides a thread or a link running through the whole Gospel of St. John. It appears first in the marriage feast at Cana, where Jesus initially refuses His mother's request on the grounds that His hour had not yet come.

And so we might ask—what is this hour about? What does it mean?

This is the hour for which Jesus came into the world—so key for us to remember—the hour which Jesus came into the world. At the beginning, then, of the Last Supper, if you may recall, Jesus sees that His hour has now come. It is the hour of His glorification, when He is to be lifted up from the earth on the cross. This lifting up—both physical, as He is exalted onto the cross—and metaphorical, as He is exalted and glorified by and with His Father.

So my dear friend Mary once told me that the more she learns about Holy Scripture, the more she realizes how little she knows.

Today, I will make sure that—since she makes her way into the presence of Jesus—being that what I’m trying to say is, she’s gone home. And as she makes her way to the presence of God that she so wanted to do for so many years, let’s hope that now she has all her answers from Holy Scripture.

And for my cousin Lucy, she continues to grow in hunger for more and more of Scripture. The many times we get together—which is not enough, usually not enough time together—our conversations tend to focus on the lives of the Saints, and Holy Scripture, as well as earthly events that foster our spiritual growth

We don’t talk about other people or what’s happening. We talk about how can we possibly grow, as the Saints did, in so many beautiful ways, and follow, imitate them here on earth.

You see, with Lucy and myself, we not only talk about— as I said—earthly things, but perhaps like the Godly wisdom that we hear in the book of Wisdom. We try to nourish our faith more and more all the time. And this is something that I believe that we should all do when we get

together with someone, whether they're knowledgeable or not: to read Scripture. To pray about it, to think about it. To read its description and to grow with someone else. Because that way we've only got one way to go—and that is to Heaven.

Now again, you might ask, "What about me? What about you?" Why not?

Have you joined or thought about joining maybe a Bible study group? Maybe in person, perhaps through the internet with Ascension Ministries. They have great programs on there. Have you maybe even watched the series *The Chosen*? And if you can't leave home, turn on the channel—see if you find the channel.

In other words, get to know more about Holy Scripture from a safe source, which is so good for us to get to know.

My suggestion is, dear friends in Christ, allow yourself to grow closer to Jesus, and enjoy the journey of life with Him as your guide.

Every time—every time—you attend the Holy Eucharist, listen to the readings. Maybe even read them before you go to Mass. Read the readings first. Maybe try and understand. Place yourself in that passage that you are reading—like our Jesuit friends, like my brother priests and others—they place themselves into that passage.

For example, the wedding at Cana. If you were there and Jesus said that to His mother, maybe a little discussion—where would you be? What would you take position in that part of that Scripture? To be there, to go with Christ. "The hour has not yet come."

To try and figure out what on earth is this hour.

You see, it takes perseverance and commitment to develop a good relationship with Christ. But work on it, work hard on it. You see, He's worth it. So are you.

Whatever you do, enjoy the journey—the journey with and to Christ and to the Heavenly Father—when you're ready to go, when He's ready to call you. Enjoy it.

Because, after all, we all want to be there one day with our beloved brothers and sisters who've gone ahead of us. May they intercede with us, and may we continue to pray for them who have gone, and for those of us who are still here on this earth.

Enjoy your spiritual journey.