

“IT IS FINISHED”

“Jesus said, “it is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” *John 19:30*

It is presumed that Jesus is referring to the fulfillment of the scriptures when He says “it is finished.” From a purely human perspective it might well be a sigh of relief after a day of torture on the cross. Under such circumstances death would be a welcome outcome. We know that Jesus was not referring to the finishing of his earthly ministry. He had the resurrection and a busy time on earth until the ascension just ahead. Certainly, His earthly ministry was just getting started – only with the notable change from an earthly Jesus to an unbounded Holy Spirit. The finish, that most would call a death, was actually just a transition.

We all live with transitions. We move from one state of being to another. Indeed, life might well be considered a series of transitions punctuated by periods of regularity. It is to our detriment that we tend to focus on the periods of regularity as happiness and achievement while we dread most transitions. Because it is during the transition that the soul soars, the mind learns and the heart feels.

Think of that great transition from child to adult called adolescence. It is a time of wonder and heartbreak, but, above all, a time of tremendous learning. Learning of all kinds: we grapple with the questions of who we are, and why we are at all. Our feelings become honed with assertiveness and self-doubt so intertwined that they are inseparable. It may not rank with the transition of the cross – that transition from death to eternity – but it is certainly the transition that usually makes or breaks the adult.

Then there is that transition from occasional work to work as career. It may be forty years of drudgery or forty years of joy, but it is ours. Whether the transition is long or short it determines, for most of us, the shape of the rest of our lives. We call that transition career choice and preparation.

There is also the transition from single to married status. A transition that for an increasing number of us is made a number of times.

Of course, there is also that transition from life to death, called retirement. There are all kinds of retirements, just as there are all kinds of adolescence. Long retirements may be regarded as periods of regularity, but I prefer to think of them as more dynamic and adventuresome, much more like adolescence. Whether long or short, interesting or dull it is going to transition you to death.

As we live through these periods of transition and regularity what is it that keeps us centered and reasonably sane in a world where the inmates of the sanatorium seem to win? That centering force is the Cross and our faith which flows from it. Our faith gives us the spiritual tools that we must have for life. When Jesus says “it is finished” he means that it has just begun. Amen