

Rev. Derek Fairman

7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter B

Today the Gospel passage is taken from the part of the Gospel According to John in which the Lord Jesus offers His prayer to His Father at the conclusion of the Last Supper Discourse. After the Last Supper, the Lord Jesus gave His Apostles instructions, that they were to carry out after His return to the Father's right hand. The Lord Jesus gave them His teachings, that they were to spread to all parts of the world.

The Lord Jesus then concluded with a prayer to the Father, part of which we have heard in the Gospel passage. We can understand that the Lord Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, and then He made His Sacrifice on the Cross. The Eucharist now makes that Sacrifice present. But before He made that Sacrifice, He offered this prayer to the Father. In a way, the Lord Jesus offers this prayer, and similarly at Mass the priest offers the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Lord Jesus prays for His disciples, and there are two things to note especially. One is that the Lord Jesus has been protecting His disciples, and He asks His Father to continue to protect them. Even though His disciples are in the world, and they are in a world that is very hostile to them, the Lord Jesus does not ask the Father to take them out of the world but to protect them, just as He has been protecting them.

The Lord Jesus also asks His Father to consecrate His disciples in the truth. What does He mean? Well, consecrating something or someone means that that object or person is set apart. The Lord Jesus is praying that the disciples will be set apart to bring His teachings to the world. The Lord Jesus is praying that His disciples will carry on His mission of bringing the truth to everyone. The Lord Jesus is also praying that His disciples will adhere to the truth and not fall away from the truth, since once someone is consecrated, that consecration is permanent.

During the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass, the priest prays for the Church, that it may advance in faith and charity. The priest also prays for the Pope, our Bishop, the clergy and laity. The Eucharistic Prayer also asks that the Lord keep those in the Church and all who are present in unity. The Eucharistic Prayer also asks for peace and salvation throughout the world.

This helps us to understand another important truth. It is true that the Mass makes present the one Sacrifice that the Lord Jesus made. It unites us to the Lord Jesus and to His Sacrifice. In addition, we know that the Lord Jesus has ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of the

Father where He intercedes for us. He continues to intercede with His Father for us. What may not be apparent at first is that the Mass unites us to our Lord's intercession in Heaven.

We can understand this a little better when we look at the Scriptures more carefully. When we read the Book of Revelation, and we read about St. John's vision of Heaven beginning in chapter 4, what becomes clear is that the liturgy that takes place in Heaven is not different than the liturgy celebrated here on earth.

Take for example the hymn of the four living creatures: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come." This is something similar to what the prophet Isaiah heard in his vision of the Lord in the Temple, when the seraphim cried, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is filled with His glory."

What should stand out to us is that we sing a similar hymn at every Mass: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." This is but one example that shows us how we are united to the liturgy in Heaven.

What does this mean? The Lord does not change, and He is beyond the confines of time and space. To Him all places and all moments in time are equally under His gaze. The Lord Jesus offered Himself once, and that Sacrifice is not constrained by time. That one Sacrifice is made present here at Mass and at every Mass. That is true not just about time but space as well. The Lord Jesus did not limit His Sacrifice to be present on earth, but when He ascended into Heaven, He took His place at the Father's right hand to continue to intercede for us.

We come to Mass not only to worship God by ourselves, but we join with those throughout the world who worship God wherever they might be. We join with those throughout the centuries who worshipped God in the past, and we mystically join with those who are to come after us. We join with the saints who are already in Heaven, and we join with all the angelic choirs who worship God in Heaven. By the Lord's mysterious working, we join with all creatures in offering our praises together.

As we approach the altar, we ask the Lord to help us. The Lord Jesus prayed that we may hold fast to the truth that He has taught us, and we ask the Lord to help us do that. The Lord Jesus prayed that we may experience His protection, and we ask the Lord to continue to protect us. We also pray that we may join our hearts to the Lord Jesus in Heaven, where He intercedes continually on our behalf.