

7 Easter B SML 2021
JN 17:1,11b-19

The setting for the last two Sunday gospels and this morning's gospel is the Last Supper. In the Upper Room, the air was thick with tension. Judas had just left on Jesus' command, "What you are going to do, do quickly." The Apostles were clueless. John said the Apostles thought Jesus sent Judas to buy more food. Yet Our Blessed Lord was fully aware of all that was about to happen. He knew Judas was laying the groundwork with the Sanhedrin to destroy him. So He thought it best to teach, knowing that in a few hours all would break loose in the garden, and His Passion would begin. What He taught covered three chapters in John's gospel:

- ✓ Jesus taught them a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.
- ✓ He taught them He would return to His heavenly Father.
- ✓ He taught them He and the Father were one.
- ✓ He taught them of the special bond between His disciples and Him. "I am the vine. You are the branches."
- ✓ He taught them the world would hate them.
- ✓ And five times He taught them about how the Holy Spirit will come to guide them, to keep them united, to help them and remind them of all that He said and did.

He told them to no longer cling to Him, but instead to turn their hearts toward the next part of His Father's plan, namely the Holy Spirit:

- ✓ descending upon them,
- ✓ filling them,
- ✓ cleansing them,
- ✓ equipping them,
- ✓ leading them,
- ✓ guiding them,
- ✓ loving them
- ✓ God within them, to them, and for them.

For Jesus would remain with them in a new and different way. Prior to His Resurrection, Jesus was with them in His Physical Body. After His Ascension, Jesus will be with them in His Mystical Body, the Church, of which Jesus is her Head and the Holy Spirit is her Soul.

Then Jesus stopped teaching, pushed back from the table, got up, walked out into the night air and looked up at the starry sky; He raised His eyes to heaven, and began to pray. As you listen to Jesus speak so intimately with His Father, you feel as if you are eavesdropping on a conversation that was meant to be private.

The night before Our Lord died, after the Last Supper, He spoke to His heavenly Father about his Ascension: “But now I am coming to you.” Yet Our Lord did not ascend to His Heavenly Father until He was confident the Apostles understood, and was certain they could stand on their own two feet. He would take them up the Bethany mountainside where they had probably sat at His feet countless times, these:

fishermen,

tax collectors,

ordinary men,

and bid them to take what He gave and taught, and change the world. And with the help of the Holy Spirit, that’s exactly what they did!

That starry night after the Last Supper, Our Lord also talked to His heavenly Father about how the world hates the Apostles, because the Apostles do not belong to the world any more than Our Lord belonged to the world.

And is that not true of any follower of Christ?

About 100 years (give or take) after Our Lord ascended into heaven, a letter was written by an unknown author to a well-known pagan named Diognetus. Just 100 years after the Ascension, this author had this to say about Christians. Now

keep in mind that 100 years after the Ascension, the Christians were all Catholic. So it would be fair to use the word Catholic for Christian. He writes:

Catholics are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities on their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. Their teaching is not based upon dreams inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine. With regard to food, dress and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in . . .

And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose them. They share their meals, but not their wives. They live in the flesh, but are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven.

Catholics love all men, but all men persecute them. They suffer dishonor, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. They are attacked by Jews as aliens, they are persecuted by the Greeks, yet no one can explain the reason for this hatred.

To speak in general terms, we may say that Catholicism is

to the world what the soul is to the body. As the soul is present in every part of the body, so Catholics are found in all the cities of the world, but cannot be identified with the world.

The Apostles did not belong to the world any more than Our Lord belonged to the world.

First century Christians, first century Catholics, did not belong to the world any more than Our Lord belongs to the world.

Neither do we. Twenty first century Catholics do not belong to the world any more than Our Lord belongs to the world.

If we do not belong to the world, we need not think like the world. We need to think in terms of the other worldly; we need to think in terms of Our Lord.

When I was on my leave of absence, the cynical used to say I was “now” living in the “real world,” as if the priesthood is not living in the “real world?” Having lived both the “real world” and the world of the priesthood, my priesthood has always been in the thick of the “real world.”

Anyway, when I was on my leave of absence and I was networking and applying and interviewing for jobs, if I did not get that job that looked so perfect as far as type of work,

salary, benefits, and whatever else, I could think in terms of the world, I could think in terms of the cynical and blame it on politics or reverse discrimination, or second guess myself with a dozen “if onlys,” or I could think in terms of the other worldly, and truly believe that God did not want me to have that job because He wanted me to work somewhere else, and work with people He needed me to meet, for my benefit and theirs. Keeping my mind and my thoughts on God made searching for a job, the right job, the job God wanted me to have, that much easier.

When I decided to buy a house, I looked high and low. I found a house in my price range, in a great neighborhood, close to where I worked, and all the rest of it, and then called my realtor only to find out that an hour before, someone bid on the house and it was under contract. And I could think in terms of the cynical and think I’ll never find a house, or I could think in terms of the other worldly, and truly believe God did not want me to have that house, because He wanted me to have other neighbors He needed me to meet, for my benefit and theirs.

The Apostles did not belong to the world any more than Our Blessed Lord belonged to the world.

First century Christians, first century Catholics for that

matter, did not belong to the world any more than Our Blessed Lord belong to the world. Likewise, twenty first century Catholics do not belong to the world any more than Our Blessed Lord belonged to the world.