Easter 7 B 2024

‘Tis the season for commencement addresses given on high school and college levels. A memorable commencement address is the exception rather than the rule. Renee DuBois was the commencement speaker at my graduation in 1972 from Catholic U. His topic was about economy in the world of the blessed who have and the economy of those who don’t: relationships make the difference. In some sense, the Last Discourse of Jesus in today’s Gospel, is a commencement address. And the last part of it—the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus.

We find Jesus himself arranging for this orderly transfer of His mission. The mission is being taken most seriously. The scene appears to be the same Supper Room. In this setting we are privileged to sit in on the Apostles, the now complete council of the divinely elected founding fathers of the Church.

Jesus prays for His disciples: *“Father, protect them with Your name which You have given Me.”* Blessing them for sacred purposes, Jesus *“sent them into the world”* just as He himself was sent by the Father. At our Baptism, we were watered, oiled, and blessed in the power of the Holy Spirit, and plunged into the world of humanity as God’s child. Every baptized person is bathed and anointed. The symbolism is clear. Anointing looks to consecration, and that means a mission to the world. At our Profession, we promised to live *“the form of the Gospel,”* missioned in the spirit of St Francis, to bring Christ and His Gospel to a broken world, and a broken world to Christ. Franciscans are immersed in society.

Franciscans do not separate themselves from the realities of ordinary life. Franciscans do not live apart in holy isolation. We live and move and have our being, embodied in the protective care of the Father, a relationship we share as we enter into the heart of the struggles of those we love and those who do not love us. We meet the Lord in the faces of our brothers and sisters.

Jesus prays for us. Jesus who taught us how to pray, prays to the Father for you and me. He extends His protection of us in the real world, immersed in a world from which He does not remove us, a world in which He prays we do not lose ourselves in it. We profess our faith in the Paschal Mystery. Our dying and rising with Christ in Baptism, our being strengthened in Confirmation by the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit, and our feeding on the Body and Blood of our Eucharistic Lord, we are “*filled up”* with the Risen Lord.

His word is His gift to us, for protection, for courage, insight, understanding, power and truth as we are told to hold fast to this Word. Jesus consecrates us in truth, in God’s word, and His own word to us. We are sacred by lives lived in accord with the Spirit of truth. Truth is sacred because it presents people, and creation, as they really are. In them, God, their Author, is seen. We are ordinary, until God gets hold of us, making us sacred as vessels of holiness. The sacrifice God wants is what Jesus gave: His word, His life, and His obedience in love. What God wants of us is our word, our life, our obedience, in love. This is what Jesus prays that we give to God.

We bring His Name and His Word to places where the great drama of life is played out. A new way of encounter, with the possibility of life-giving hope, for the sanctification of a wounded humanity.

