

Easter 7A 2014

Jesus' Final Prayer

On the eve before his death, Jesus gathered his disciples to prepare them for what was to happen, and to assure them that whatever happened he would not abandon them. At that final gathering, Jesus pronounced the great prayer we heard in today's gospel. This prayer makes three points.

First, Jesus tells his disciples that the hour has come for him to pass from this life to the Father who sent him into the world. While this hour is the moment of Jesus' suffering and death, it is also be the moment when God glorifies Jesus by raising him from the dead. The hour of Jesus' death, the hour for which he has been preparing his whole life, will not be an hour of shame and defeat, but an hour of glory and victory because God will raise him from the dead.

Second, Jesus says that he has finished the work the Father sent him to do. Jesus has revealed God's name to his disciples; Jesus has revealed God to the world. Jesus has given eternal life to those who believe in him since those who know God in Jesus Christ already possess the seed of eternal life. They are not merely waiting for eternal life; they already enjoy something of eternal life.

Finally, Jesus prays for us. He prays for his disciples. He prays that we will persevere in the Word he has revealed to us. He prays that we will continue to live

in the life that he has given us. He prays we will live in the world without being of the world.

This prayer of Jesus speaks to me in three ways. First, it teaches me that death has no power over me so long as I live in and with Jesus Christ. O yes, I will die. But death will not have the final word, the last word; for that word belongs to God who has overcome the power of death in Jesus Christ.

Second, this prayer teaches me that I enjoy eternal life. Eternal life is not something far and distant in the future. Eternal life is the life of God, a life I already enjoy because I belong to Christ. I received this life when I was baptized into Christ, and this life grows in me every time I receive the Eucharist, which preserves us from eternal death.

Finally, this prayer teaches me that I am not alone. I belong to a community of disciples for whom Christ is always praying and interceding. To be sure there are moments I may feel alone, but I am not alone so long as I live in the community of disciples for whom the risen Lord prays.

Catholicism is dear and precious to me because it assures me that God has overcome death, because it gives me the seed of eternal life even now, because it makes me a member of a community for whom the risen Christ is always praying and interceding. What greater gift is there than this gift of God's grace and mercy? What greater gift is there than our Catholic faith?