

Easter Week 7 Wednesday

Consecrate them in the truth

Today's Gospel includes Jesus' prayer to the Father for his disciples: *Consecrate them in the truth*. It is, perhaps, a difficult expression to understand immediately.

Consecrate means *make holy*, and to be holy is to be like God. Other religions prescribe elaborate rituals so that man may approach, cautiously and with difficulty, the holiness of God. In Judaism, for example, the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies only once a year, and this only after an elaborate ritual of consecration. But for the Christian, the death of Jesus tore the temple curtain in two: the sanctuary was opened, and Jesus, the true High Priest, places those who are united with him in direct contact with the Almighty.

It is in this context that we find our phrase, *Consecrate them in the truth*. It is the truth, then, that makes humanity holy, the truth that takes the place of the elaborate purification rituals which enabled the High Priest to stand before the majesty of God, the truth that allows every baptised Christian to stand before the altar and pray, "Our Father".

But truth, what is that? We may recall the contemptuous retort of Pilate, who was willing to sacrifice the truth of Jesus' innocence for political expediency. His scepticism would do any modern relativist proud. But Jesus prays to his Father "Your word is truth", and of course Jesus himself is the Word.

To understand this, we must consider that truth may be considered in true ways, in two directions, as it were. A drawing of a building is said to be "true" if it represents the building accurately ... except that if that drawing is a blueprint, then it is the building that is true – or not – to its representation in the blueprint.

We are consecrated in the truth – made holy, made God-like in the truth – to the extent that we, God's building, conform to God's idea, God's plan, God's blueprint for us – our destiny as sons and daughters in the Son. Jesus is truth – the way, the truth and the life – because he is the perfect image of the Father. "Philip," he had said, "to see me is to see the Father." We are consecrated in the truth to the extent that we too conform to his image.

It becomes immediately clear, then, that being consecrated in the truth is not something that was over and done with at our baptism, or our profession, or our ordination, or at any particular moment of lucidity when we gained greater insight into God and ourselves. Rather, it is a constant process. We are a work in progress,

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God's work, and so long as we travel on this journey of life we are not yet the finished product. The Dominican motto of "Veritas", then, is not an arrogant claim to have all the answers but rather a commitment to a process of becoming true, true to God's plan revealed to us in Jesus.

There is much more I would like to say about this phrase, but perhaps not at a weekday Mass! We can explore it further another time. Suffice it to say here that creatures represent a truth about God – for at each stage of creation, "God saw it, and it was good" – but the human being alone, having been given the power to choose good or evil, alone of all creatures has the power to be true or false to destiny God has planned. And so Jesus prays on the eve of his passion,

*for their sake I consecrate myself
so that they too may be consecrated in truth.*

*St Dominic's Priory
27 May, 2020*