

Year B, May 13, 2018
7 Easter
Christ Church, Mexia

Today we heard again the “high priestly prayer” of Jesus. The author of John places this at the end of his teachings in the “upper room,” just before he and the disciples leave for the garden where he will be betrayed. This is the time when the life of the disciples will change drastically. This transitional time is generally referred to by anthropologists and psychologists as liminal time. Fr. Richard Rohr describes it this way: “It is when you have left the tried and true but have not yet been able to replace it with anything else. It is when you are between your old comfort zone and any possible new answer. If you are not trained in how to hold anxiety, how to live with ambiguity, how to entrust and wait, you will run... anything to flee this terrible cloud of unknowing.

I’m sure that you can think of times in your life when you may have experienced liminal time. Possibly graduating from school, leaving an occupation in which you were involved for a long time for something new, the death of a close, loved one and the necessary adjustments. Change and the uncertainty it brings can weigh heavily on us. We have the truths and structure of what was, but what will be like now?

Perhaps it is somewhat like this saying by Br. Curtis Almquist (SSJE): “When you are in the middle of the dark night, there is absolutely no clue that a dawning will ever happen, no reason to imagine light again filling your world... except if you remember that, amazingly enough, it has happened before, even on the darkest of nights.” But we don’t always have that reference point that it has happened before, and we can’t always imagine where we are headed and what it will be like.

In some ways, Jesus reflects this within his prayer. He reflects on his relationship with the Father and his mission here on earth, his time with his disciples. However, he knows where he is going – returning to the Father, but the disciples won’t have that clarity. They will remain in this world, but Jesus has prepared them as best he can. He has given them the truth, the truth that will endure from the past into the future. But in the past, they have had difficulty understanding and holding to that truth. But truth seems to be an important aspect, because Jesus asks God to “sanctify them in the truth” – the truth that will help them manage in liminal time of being in the world without

him, but not yet in the kingdom of God. And this is where we, as Christians find ourselves today.

Knowing the truth – adhering to the truth can be difficult. For example, Franklin Jones reminds us that “(w)hen somebody says, ‘That’s a good question,’ you can be pretty sure it’s a lot better than the answer you’re going to get.” Or there is a story about truth that ran in *Leadership* magazine in 1995: “When truth unmask wrong, those who are exposed get very nervous, like the two brothers in a story I recently heard. These brothers were rich. They were also wicked. Both lived a wild, unprofitable existence, using their wealth to cover up the dark side of their lives. On the surface, however, few would have guessed it, for these consummate cover-up artists attended the same church almost every Sunday and contributed large sums to various church-related projects.

Then the church called a new pastor, a young man who preached the truth with zeal and courage. Before long, attendance had grown so much that the church needed a larger worship center. Being a man of keen insight and strong integrity, this young pastor had also seen through the hypocritical lifestyles of the two brothers.

Suddenly one of the brothers died, and the young pastor was asked to preach his funeral. The day before the funeral, the surviving brother pulled the minister aside and handed him an envelope. ‘There’s a check in here that is large enough to pay the entire amount you need for the new sanctuary,’ he whispered. ‘All I ask is one favor: Tell the people at the funeral that *he was a saint.*’ The minister gave the brother his word; he would do precisely what was asked. That afternoon he deposited the check into the church’s account.

The next day the young pastor stood before the casket at the funeral service and said with firm conviction, ‘This man was an ungodly sinner, wicked to the core. He was unfaithful to his wife, hot-tempered with his children, ruthless in his business, and a hypocrite at church... but compared to his brother *he was a saint.*’” Adhering to the truth can be difficult, but it is necessary. Jesus asked God to sanctify us in truth. Sanctify means to be “set apart.” We are meant to be different.

So, I ask you, as we stand in liminal time, the way the world was/is and the way we hope it will be, to concentrate on the truth that is Jesus, the Word. Recall what we just said moments ago in the Gloria Patri: “...as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”

In the name of the one God, the Creator, the Word and the Spirit.

Amen.