

The prayer of Jesus at the end of the Last Supper continues, and we look into his mind as he considers our future.

We can recognise first of all today the likeness of the themes of the final prayer of Jesus to the themes of the Lord's Prayer as given to us in Matthew's Gospel, the one we recite three times a day. He begins *Holy Father*, and in the Lord's prayer he remembers that God is in heaven and we are on the earth, just as in this prayer he says *I am not in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you*. Today he prays that we be kept true to the Father's name, as in the Lord's Prayer he prays *Hallowed by thy name*.

When we say *Thy Kingdom come* we are using a word that is not one of the favourites of John. But here he enters more deeply into the difference between the earthly kingdoms and the reign of God. We who have received the Name of God are at odds with the world, and the coming of God's reign is a violent one, in which people are already being hurt for their belonging to God and not to the world.

The way in which we will be made safe and sound in this frightening landscape is typical of the Evangelist's thought about Jesus. We shall be safe in God's hands if we are utterly poured out, as he is, in love for the Father. The word he uses for this pouring-out in trustful love is *consecrate*. Jesus prays that the Father himself should *consecrate us in the truth: his word is truth*. The Prologue of the Gospel tells us that Jesus is the Word of God, and the Word became flesh, and we saw his glory, full of grace and truth. It is in this truth that we are to be consecrated, made over to God and to his reign. Nothing else can secure us from the power of this world and its ruler, who is the Father of Lies.

Nevertheless, Jesus specifically does not pray that we should be removed from the world. Our consecration does not take the form of a flight from the world. Like Jesus himself, we are to stay with the dark and evil and untrustworthiness of the unsaved world, and like him we are to reflect light to it, and be completely one with each other: so that when the world comes to condemn us, and even to banish us from its history - as it banished Jesus on the Cross - we will, like Jesus, be revealed to the world in our consecration to God in truth. This is what Paul says:

*If we have died with him, then we shall live with him:
if we hold firm, then we shall reign with him*

This joins together the theme of *dying with Christ* and the theme of *the Reign of God*. The call to us is very clear: we must be people who respond in a new way to the opposition of the world. Some believers feel the need to create opposition where it doesn't exist, and fight a battle for the sake of a battle. But once we are sure that we are upholding the cause of love against a world of hate, we must recognise that this is the moment for consecration, and we must find our glory, not in surviving triumphantly in the world, but in being poured out as Jesus was, to the glee of his enemies, and the satisfaction of the earthly powers. It is in this precise experience that the truth is told, and the seeds of eternity are sown in the world.