

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

**Seventh Sunday
of Easter**

Gospel Word
John 17:11b-19

One of the most well known lines from the Gospel according to John is "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son..." (John 3:16). This passage deserves to be on every Catholic's *Top Ten* list of important biblical lines. God's deep love of the world is the background against which we read today's Gospel reading. If read quickly, we can end up being somewhat confused about this section of the Gospel according to John. Keep in mind that "the world," the place where we humans live this part of our lives, is created and loved by God and therefore is basically good.

Jesus does not duck the problem of the existence of evil in his farewell remarks. This part of his prayer for his disciples reminds us of the line "deliver us from evil" in the Lord's Prayer. Evil here refers to sin. It is a prayer seeking the Father's protection for the disciples. The protection sought is not protection from the world, but protection from the evil of sin. As his final request, Jesus is asking the Father to consecrate the disciples, to make them holy.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

Through our Baptism we have been consecrated and made holy. The Triune God dwells within us already. That is the truth, but that is not magic. We spend our lives responding to that presence. The closer we grow in intimacy with the God who dwells among and in us, the more we are set apart from sin and the more we reveal to others the gracious loving face of God.

The world as we experience it can sometimes be a dangerous and difficult place to grow in holiness. It is up to us not only to grow in holiness but also through the words and actions of our lives to bring about a blossoming of holiness into the world. Boiled down to essentials, this means that life in this world is exceedingly important and all that we do in this world can be holy and pleasing to God. Being worldly is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, the Church continuously teaches that the vocation of the laity is to the world. We live out our vocation by what we do for our families, neighborhoods, communities, and work places and wherever we find ourselves in this world.

That's not a small truth. Some like to separate the world from what's thought to be spiritual or religious. Vatican II notes that to separate Sunday worship from what we do the rest of the week is an error. Biblical scholars like to point out that Jesus spent most of his life in "worldly" pursuits as a dutiful family member and as a skilled artisan. Home and workplace were made holy by the life of Jesus. To "consecrate" the world is to act out our Christian values and virtues in the world.

One of the greatest challenges of Christian faith is connecting it with the ordinary activities of life. It is in the day-to-day opportunities and challenges that we are invited to make this world better, to erase injustices, to love and forgive without condition, and to reach out to the lonely, isolated, and alienated. Look for opportunities this week to deepen your relationship with God and to consecrate the parts of the world you inhabit with your presence.

One-line Prayer

God the Father, we thank you for the world you created and love. Amen.