

Do you feel like a gift from God??? Jesus thinks you are....

"All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

Our Gospel today is what is known as the high priestly prayer of Jesus. The prayers in the Gospels that are credited to Jesus are usually pretty short...this one is not. It is long and heartfelt and a true communication from Jesus to his father. This part of the Gospel actually takes place before Jesus is arrested. it seems a bit out of place : but is it....? We are ending Easter today and we probably should concentrate on the great sacrifice that has been made for us.

Rev Frank Logue writes:" We find in the Gospel what Jesus prayed, but we should also notice *that* Jesus prayed. His life is soon to end. He is in the last hours with his disciples. Rather than fitting in an all-night cram session to get the last bit of theological information into his disciples' heads, Jesus pauses and prays."

That is interesting.. Think about the monumental event He is about to face. He knows his earthly fate.

Have you ever seen the signs that say WWJD? for a while it was everywhere, bumper stickers, wrist bands, signs...it was popularized acronym for What Would Jesus Do??? As we hear Jesus words today, we realize that Jesus would do is to pray. No matter how difficult the situation seemed to be, Jesus prayed. He often went away by himself to pray: He gathered together a few loaves and fishes and

asked a blessing; The sermon on the mount is a long list of blessings; He prayed for Lazarus; the list goes on and on. What if we responded to the situations in our lives the same way? "How much more should our first response be to pray in all the chances and changes that life sends our way?"

Let's think about prayer for a moment. Who here prays all the time? I wish I could say I did...In 1 Thessalonians 5 it says to pray unceasingly; in Ephesians 6 it says "pray in the spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication." then it says, "keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints." All the saints...that means each of us. In the past couple of weeks I had a friend who had a stroke. She was in mortal danger. I vowed I would pray for her every hour until she was out of danger. I did that... well I tried but then I had to modify my commitment and changed it to every waking hour; then I changed that to all the hours I did not become preoccupied and forget. Did pretty well with those modifications. She has done well and the prayers are a lot less frequent now. But the point may be that it can be easier to fit prayer into our daily lives than we sometimes think. My prayers for Maria were frequent, short and to the point. Not a lot of words required.... We can all do the arrow shots to God every day, sort of what I call "drive-by prayers" Those tend to be asking prayers, prayers for a specific need at a specific time. But today we have an example of lengthy deep prayer between Jesus and God.

As Episcopalians we have a rich heritage of prayer. First and foremost we are people of the book. the book of common Prayer is a prayer and scripture laden outline for all of us to follow. I remember the story of the priest who had been trying to get his people to read the Bible. One woman spoke up and said she quit doing that, it seemed to be just a bunch of quotes from the prayer book.

Take a prayer book and turn to page 814. Here is the beginning of a list of some 70 prayers to address almost any need you can think of. On page 453 prayers for

the sick and dying begin. On page 430 is the blessing of a marriage. On page 159 we begin the collects...they are prayers for every Sunday, every feast day and Saint that we celebrate throughout the year. We have the daily office for morning, noon, evening and night time that anyone can use. on page 137 it starts the daily devotional for individuals and families. We should never want for prayer guidance. But there are probably as many ways to pray as there are people. Take a moment and think about when you feel close to God and prayer comes easily. This prayer that is put forward in our Gospel today is not for Jesus himself. It is for the closeness of God and his people....in other words all of us. You know...those gifts from God that He mentions.?? Again quoting Rev Frank Logue: "Making daily times for these prayers will not earn God's favor; you already have been given that grace freely. Instead, the daily times of prayer will ground your day in connection to the Holy Trinity.

This was Jesus' will for you. Jesus wanted you to find and nurture that deep, abiding connection to God.... Your answer to Jesus' prayer is found when you make time to pray and so grow closer to the God who knows you fully and loves you completely."

We had Ascension day this week. We commemorate the fact that Jesus has gone back to be with the Father again with a promise to return. Next week is Pentecost. we get to celebrate the experience of the gift of the Holy Spirit; the advocate that Jesus promised would always be with us. That advocate is always accessible and brings us the joy that God prepares for us; The joy we come to know thru prayer and our relationship with God.

So as we finish our Easter season let us remember that we are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song! We are not looking for a shallow joy, we want that relationship with God that helps feed our souls. We look forward to a joy that comes from faith; a faith that grows through unselfish love of God and our

neighbor. We can all accomplish that. And remember there is more than one way to offer the prayer our hearts send to God. Share your words and thoughts; share your life and work; share your love with those that God loves. You have the tools to have a true communication with God just as the Gospel has shown us today.