

Commentary for Trinity Sunday



The elderly Mother Superior was having a difficult time getting going in the morning. The other nuns were concerned so they called the doctor. After an examination, the doctor told the sisters that Mother Superior was having some circulation problems. "Actually, what would work well for her would be for you to give her a little drink in the morning." The sisters protested that there was no way Mother Superior would ever drink alcohol. So the doctor asked if Mother Superior drank milk. "Of course," they said. "In that case, mix a little vodka in with her milk in the morning." Well, the sisters did that, and Mother Superior had less trouble getting going in the morning. After a couple of years, though, her age did take over. All the sisters gathered around Mother Superior as she lay on her deathbed. "Do you have any final advice for us, Mother Superior," one of the sisters asked. "Yes," said the dear old nun, "Don't ever sell that cow."

A person's last words, whether it is leaving a job or position or sport or leaving the world are viewed with particular significance. Washington's Farewell Address were the last words of the founding Father to his country. He wrote many important speeches, but this speech was particularly significant because it was his last as president.

This week's gospel presents the last words of Jesus on earth, before he ascended to the Father. St. Matthew makes this both the conclusion and the climax of his gospel. The setting is a mountain in Galilee. Jesus began His teaching in Galilee and would end His teaching in Galilee. St. Matthew put the main body of Jesus' teaching on a mountain earlier in the Gospel, that was the Sermon on the Mount. Just as Moses received the law on a mountain, Mountain Sinai, the Christians receive the new law from a mountain. The conclusion to this law is given on a mountain. Eleven disciples are gathered there. There were more than this, but these particular eleven were the eleven of the twelve Jesus had picked out earlier. They would become the apostles, the ones sent to carry his message to the world. They saw Jesus. Even those who had doubted that he really did rise from the dead, saw Him and did homage. Now they are ready for the Lord to give them His final instructions.

Jesus begins by saying that He, the Son of God and their brother, has been given authority over creation. What the disciples must do is go to all the nations and make the people of every land His disciples. They are to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. People are to be taught everything the disciples were taught. All disciples are to know that wherever they go, Jesus is there with them until the end of the world.

The final words of Jesus are presented today particularly because of the reference to baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit. In the new order of creation, God has revealed Himself as one God with three persons. He is the Father who Creates, He is the Son who Redeems, He is the Spirit who Empowers. We are baptized in the name of all three because the disciples of Jesus both benefit from and manifest all three persons of the Trinity. We have been created by God and are called to share in His creation and stewardship of life. We are redeemed by Jesus, His death reestablished our relationship with God and purchased eternal life for us, redeemed us from the power of evil. We are called to live as new beings, at war with evil. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works through us empowering us to bring Christ to others and others to Christ. We make the sign of the cross proclaiming the new relationship we share with God, recognizing what we have received and the responsibility we have to bring this relationship to others.

The last words of Jesus command us to make the life of the Trinity real to others. We are then told that we will not do this alone. Even though He is ascending to the Father, He is still with us, always, until the end of the world.

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