

The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus (7th Sunday of Easter, Year A)

Acts 1:12-14—The Disciples in the Upper Room

1. Twelve Apostles: devoted themselves to “prayer” in the “upper room” (1:12-14)

Psalm 27—I Shall See the Good Things of the Lord

1. Temple: “one thing” I desire; to live in “the house of the Lord” (27:4)

John 17:1-11—The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus

1. “High-Priestly Prayer”: Lutheran theologian David Chytraeus (1530-1600)
2. Consecration: Jesus uses the word “consecrate” (Greek *hagiazō*) (John 17:17, 19).

Now this is what you shall do to them to *consecrate* (Greek *hagiasai*) them, that they may serve me *as priests*. (Exod 29:1 LXX)

3. Intercession: corresponds to the Day of Atonement (Hebrwe *yom kippur*).¹

The Day of Atonement

1. The High Priest sacrifices “for himself” (Lev 16:11, 17)
2. The High Priest sacrifices “for his house” (Lev 16:11, 17)
3. The High Priest sacrifices for “the assembly” (Lev 16:17)

The Prayer of Jesus

1. Jesus prays for himself: “glorify your Son” (John 17:1, 5)
2. Jesus prays for the disciples: “I am praying for them” (John 17:9, 10, 12)
3. Jesus prays “also for those who believe in me through their word” (John 17:21, 22)

The Living Tradition

Catechism: When “his hour” came, Jesus prayed to the Father. *His prayer, the longest transmitted by the Gospel, embraces the whole economy of creation and salvation, as well as his death and Resurrection.* The prayer of the Hour of Jesus always remains his own, just as his Passover “once for all” remains ever present in the liturgy of his Church. *Christian Tradition rightly calls this prayer the “priestly” prayer of Jesus. It is the prayer of our high priest, inseparable from his sacrifice, from his passing over (Passover) to the Father to whom he is wholly “consecrated.”* In this Paschal and sacrificial prayer, everything is recapitulated in Christ: God and the world; the Word and

¹ André Feuillet, *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers* (trans. Matthew J. O’Connell; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 49-79.

the flesh; eternal life and time; the love that hands itself over and the sin that betrays it; the disciples present and those who will believe in him by their word; humiliation and glory. *It is the prayer of unity.* (CCC 2746-49)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (7th Sunday of Easter, Year A)

1. How is Jesus' prayer in John 17 a "priestly" prayer? How does his Passion and death relate to the Jewish Day of Atonement?

For Further Reading

1. André Feuillet, *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers*. Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1975.
2. Joseph Ratzinger [Benedict XVI], *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*. Trans. Vatican Secretariat of State. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2011.