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## **We Do Not Belong to This World**

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It is mid-April, and I am just weeks away from completing my studies at VTS. Then, God willing and the people consenting, I'll be ordained to the diaconate and by year's end to the priesthood.

As you can imagine, this is an incredibly stressful time almost consumed by finalizing coursework and interviewing for a first call. When asked how I am coping, I've answered honestly – "My life is turned over to God." This is not a trite response, nor is it an easy state of mind. I am responsible for my life in this world, and I live in the present.

I am able to rest in my faith in God by beginning each day with prayer.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus prays for the disciples and for us – we who "do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world" (John 17:14). Jesus stresses a common nature between himself and the people and then

restates it – “They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world” (John 17:16). In scripture when a word or phrase is repeated, it’s done to draw our attention. It’s saying to us, “Hey, listen up, this is important!”

Jesus is drawing attention to our common nature, our state of being – that Jesus does not belong to this world and neither do we. We all belong to God. And yet while we do not belong to this world, Jesus proclaims the Gospel *in the world*, and he shares the good news with us so that his joy can be made complete *in us*. What is this joy and how in the world are we qualified to complete it?

The incarnate Christ shares our human nature living as a mortal experiencing hunger, cold, grief, and joy. The divine Christ, the holy Second Person of the Trinity, is sanctified, sinless in his divine-human incarnation. His prayer is for us to be sanctified in the truth – which Jesus makes clear, God’s “Word is truth.”

Guided by the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to turn our lives over to God through an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. This intimacy is built on trust. This is the joy that Jesus seeks, and it is made complete – *in us*. That is an utterly overwhelming prospect, isn’t it? Yet Jesus prays for this sanctification for us. The truth of our shared nature with Jesus Christ – that none of us are of this world – is so important that Jesus repeats it in prayer to God. The repetition is not for God’s sake but for ours. Jesus is sanctified by his faith in his Father, and we are sanctified by our faith, too.

The Word of God is truth, and the truth prays on our behalf. What are ways that we can proclaim the Gospel in this world while working to perceive the world as Christ would have us?

Let’s begin as Jesus did – in prayer to God for the people. All people. Jesus speaks the Word in the world so that *they* may enter into *his nature, his joy made complete*. This completeness is possible when we turn our lives over to God – “Thy will be done.” Our personal prayer practices can bring us to a state of belonging and coming closer to God.

Remember to pray for all people, including our brothers and sisters who share this world with us. Pray in thanksgiving for the love of God. Pray for protection from pain, suffering, and evil that is part of our human condition.

When we are stressed or consumed by fear – whether about our job, our health, our finances, our family issues, or feel that we just do not belong, our faith resides in our common nature with Jesus Christ. When these moments come, as they surely do for all of us, we can remember to turn our lives over to God – return to the true source we trust and to whom we pray. The Lord's Word is truth. We do not belong to this world; we belong to God in Jesus Christ.