

Easter VII Year B

“Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth.”

I usually go through my E-mail spam without so much as looking at any of it, in fact we've worked on our filter and the spam is less than usual, but spammers still won't be denied (and who are these people anyway); now they can send you mail under the name of someone you know...and they come up with catchy titles and phrases that presumably lure naïve priest types like me into checking out the message. The caption on one I received a few weeks ago from someone I knew, I thought, read “Apostolic Greetings” ... so I opened it and there it was again, the same old thing, (duped again): “Greetings dear one, I am Rose Baker of the Ivory Coast; I have been a widow for five years...my late husband was the chancellor to the Exchequer and has left me a sum of 6.5 million U.S. dollars. I am looking for someone I can trust who will be caretaker of this fortune, and with whom I will share 25%..... I guess the check is in the mail. So I deleted it and sent it into the cyber phantom zone.

So I'm not sure what the moral of this story is, other than in this simple greeting is the word that captures the essence of John's Gospel.... *apostlos*, the Greek word which means “sent one,” Apostle, the one sent. Sandra Schneiders, a formidable scholar on John, argues that this passage in the seventeenth chapter is the definitive essence of this enigmatic piece of New Testament literature called the Gospel of John, the latest and far more controversial gospel in the early church.

In previous chapters Jesus has been teaching his disciples about their calling; about their true nature....He the exemplar... He tells them that they are no longer slaves, but friends...In their maturing in the faith they are no longer slaves to the ways of empire, but now they are friends of God, and friends of God's ways.... A sacred community set free to love no less so than the way God loves....set free as life giving potential, like God...God the life giving potential of the universe...and that dear brothers and sisters is our story, our true nature....a life characterized by transformation and process...never arriving, but always discovering... our work, the letting loose of potential engendering hope and possibility and change, and the world waits for us who are sent.... We the apostles of post modernity.

But here in the seventeenth chapter things go deeper; we are let in on an intimate conversation between Jesus and God on the eve of Jesus' death... here we are let in on the heart of the matter, the secret... “As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” Jesus tells

God in this prayerful reverie. Here the writers of this gospel make the startling claim that there is no qualitative difference between the life of God and our true nature as humankind....(that was the great controversy that almost kept this gospel out of the canon of scripture)...God's legacy to the world found in Jesus is now our legacy. Jesus passes the torch to us...the apostles...we now the ones sent, just as Jesus was sent.

This is at its heart the story of incarnation, our story and God's story, one story...the enfleshment of God's life in us the people of faith...people of conscience...the ones who with all they've got, serve the good...the ones who love their world as they love themselves...sent for the world's sake to bear mercy and kindness and healing and nonviolence and justice...and food and water and shelter and education and healing and empowerment...the ones who enact God's commonweal are the *Word* for our world, the truth and the life.... Establishing commonweal....living a radical mutuality, a sacred collaboration for the common good that has the power to stand against the inequities and injustices of our world... a community of love among friends who are given, sent, for the restoration of the world's dignity... all of us in God, and all of us part of one another....all of us sanctified in the truth, a holy people,, a holy fellowship, holy as God is holy, bearing and participating in the very life of God and sent that the world might be saved, that is, that all in the world might have well being and dignity....Dare we believe such a thing: that we matter so profoundly ...and in believing such a thing, one can only be awestruck...We in God and God in us, branches and vine... "apostolic greetings" indeed.

Throughout the course of Hebrew scripture and the New Testament literature there are chronicled the ones sent throughout the sweep of Biblical history...It is the way of things, this sending...sent on a marvelous journey... a glowing symbol of process, a glowing symbol of how the world is created and recreated...the unfolding and intimate becoming of the creation and we in its becoming...the outward and visible sign that the world is forever in transformation...all things becoming new...still....we in a long line of sent ones: the first humans sent from the garden into the world... Abraham is sent from Ur into an alien land.....Jacob sent out from his family...Joseph sent to Egypt...Elijah and Elisha sent to preach the truth up and against power gone terribly wrong...sent to heal....John the Baptist, and Jesus sent into the brokenness and violence of their world calling for true humanity....and Saul of Tarsus...sent...and Thomas sent quite possibly to India....and others sent out on a journey that will redeem all in all...sent to reconcile the creation to the way God imagines it to be...Very good...and we... we sent...we sent the way the universe was sent in the very

beginning... sent out in a burst of love as the divine substance, the same substance... strings of harmonies in reiteration... of matter and energy... of Word in the beginning... the Word, a cappella, singing time and space into being, music enough for the sonorous beginnings of all things... and we of the substance of the music, the substance of the source... we of the divine, sacred hands and hearts... sent... and we as community are transformed as well as we stand in the light of resurrection, this light scattered profusely across time and space.... In this way of life we stand in a world forever being made new.... a world in which we celebrate the whole of the utter richness of being Today is a prime example of such a day in the life in the commonweal of God... we will in particular celebrate the life of Cade Thompson who will be baptized... he about to begin his journey as apostle, as world changer.... and we will celebrate the committal of ashes celebrating the life of Brian Montgomery, another such apostle sent to grace the world with his life now ended; so the journey begins again and again in which we all share ... Cade may you grace the world with your life, as Brian graced the world with his.... and all of us, and those who will come after us, God's friends forever, will continue the song of life, affirming that life and death and grief and joy are part of this luminous whole that God calls good.... in God's commonweal everything belongs to the one beautiful song.

Fare forward travelers; you are not the same people who left the station, T.S. Eliot writes... nor will the world to whom we are sent be left unchanged... fare forward sent ones... the world waits for the commonweal of God.... becoming in gracious mutuality, as it ever has and as it forever shall.... fare forward sent ones... you God's apprentice alchemists... transforming the broken, the dispossessed, the leaden, the dull and meaninglessness into hope and dignity and joy and peace... fare forward honored friends of God, you who stand against the powers and principalities about whom John warns us... powers and principalities that would sap the life force... Godspeed in your sacred befriending... and may they be many, these friends, friends imbued and raised up with the life of God ... many friends to learn the art of befriending yet to come.

The truth of the matter is that we are God's truth in the world, heirs of Christ's legacy, bearers of God's life... we the body and the blood to be eaten and drunk by the famished... We taken, blessed and broken and given... sent as salvation real and alive and vital.... Brothers and sisters of the faith, I send you this day apostolic greetings... I send you this day greetings of hope and courage for your journey.... blessed are you good people of the way who are sent.... and blessed be those who will receive

us... they who are slaves no longer, but friends, friends of God forever....
and singers of the one beautiful, beautiful song.