

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Today our liturgical calendar has given us a richness of choices. Today is Rogation Wednesday, a day of repentance and prayer. The proper color for Rogation Wednesday is violet.

You may have noticed that the paraments aren't violet today. That's because tomorrow is the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, a Feast of the First Class. First Class Feasts, the Feasts of Christ, are "strong" enough that they reach back to the day before and take precedence over "lesser" commemorations. Doing the liturgical math, that means that if there is only one Mass on Rogation Wednesday, as we have today, the rubrics direct us to celebrate the Vigil of the Ascension. So the altar is gold.

But in their wisdom, our fathers in the faith have assigned to this Wednesday the Johannine account of the High Priestly Prayer, the Prayer our Lord prayed in the Upper Room before going to Gethsemane to be arrested. We anticipate the celebration of the Ascension, as we meditate on one of the greatest prayers in Holy Scripture.

After instituting the Sacrament of the Altar, before His arrest, our Lord prayed. His prayer is a model for us in this time of Rogation, these days of prayer. The Son prayed the Father first praying for Himself, that He be glorified in glorifying the Father. The glory that lay before Him is the shame of the cross.

He then prays for His Disciples. He remembers them before the gracious Father to whom He will reconcile them. They will soon be without Him, the Cornerstone torn from the building.

Lastly, then, the Lord prayed for the whole Church, His precious and Holy Body on earth. In that He prayed for you, you who are baptized into His Name. The prayer ended, they sang a hymn, and He went to be arrested. He knew what lay ahead. He went willingly. He went for you. And He foreknew His Ascension, as He prayed "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You, Holy Father."

Before His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension He prayed for all those who would believe through the Apostolic Word. He prayed for those who through the work of the Holy Spirit would come to faith by hearing. From the foundation of the world God has known that you would be sundered from the unbelieving and added to His Holy Church. So Christ prayed for you. He prayed for you who the Father gave Him. Then they sang a hymn, and He died for you.

In the High Priestly prayer our Lord does not pray for the world. He says to the Father "I do not pray for the world." Christ did not breathlessly and hurriedly send His disciples out to "win souls for the Kingdom" because "time is short and hell is hot". God is in control. He spent three years preparing the Twelve. He did not establish an alternate route to enable disciples to preach and teach more quickly. Even at the end of three years of Catechesis with Christ Himself, some of them did not believe.

He is God. He knows who will be saved – which is to say that the doctrine of election is fundamental to the mission of the Church. Our best efforts to evangelize will never bear fruit outside of the elect. No human program or initiative will increase the number of those chosen from the foundation of the world.

And the elect will be added to the Church in the way and through the means that Christ directs – by the work of His Spirit, the Spirit He sent ten days after His Ascension, the Spirit that saves through Baptism and hearing the Word of Christ. That is how He brought you to salvation.

He did not pray for the world. But He died for it. His precious death is sufficient for the sins of all men of all times. Although most will never come to faith, the atonement Christ provides is sufficient also for them. And in His death is the complete remission of all your sins.

The very sins that kept you from believing, the selfish sins that kept you from faith, the idolatrous sins that kept you from knowing God, the fleshly sins that kept you with the world in unbelief, these sins are the sins for which Christ died. So before His death He prayed for you. And in His death your sins are forgiven.

And that that forgiveness be made yours here, this day, 2000 years after Christ's death and resurrection. By the Spirit's power He gives to you the Words the Father gave Him, the Holy Scriptures, that you receive them, and that you know surely that He came forth from God, and that He returned to God the Father.

That faith, that belief, is the Spirit's work in you. So by faith Christ, who is glorified by His cross and empty tomb, Christ, who is glorified in His Ascension, is glorified among you also. And so the Father is glorified, for the Son finished His work that you who the Father gave to Him be saved.

So it is that you can confidently approach Him in Prayer. And it is that you can kneel in faith at this altar, and receive His Body and Blood to your eternal benefit, that you be One with Him as He is One with the Father.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.