

JOHN 17, 11 – 19

CONSECRATION AND PROTECTION

I think these two words in this excerpt from John's Gospel summon our attention. In the footnote to this passage in the NIV the word '*sanctify*' in verses 17, 19 is translated as '*set apart for sacred use*' or '*make holy*'; this can be summed up in CONSECRATION.

We are all familiar with this word in relation to sacred buildings. We are now 8 months into our 150th celebrations at St Mark's. Looking back to the start of this year when the Vicar led us to go beyond the church building and to go into the local community, we can see that Coronavirus has given us no choice in that matter. The VE Day street-parties proved a splendid opportunity to do this.

For Jesus and His followers the outreach had been anything but a party and the outside world was hostile. Jesus' prayer for His disciples in these verses is much appreciated as affirmation that, now at God's right hand, Jesus seeks *our* PROTECTION as we go into the world. This is an important aspect of Ascension Day, which assures us that His prayer - as in verses 11, 12 and 15 - is offered and heard in Heaven.

Next Sunday will be the Feast of Pentecost when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. In the Rite of Confirmation we received the fulfilment of God's promise that the Holy Spirit would confirm us, as we confirmed to do what our godparents pledged we would. In verse 13 Jesus prays that His followers might have the full measure of His joy within them.

A prayer suggested for Pentecost is as follows:

'Holy Spirit, thank You that You are living in me, showing me God's love, and helping me share that love with others.'

And, in the words of Frances Ridley Havergal's well-known hymn:

'Take my life and let it be consecrated unto Thee.'