

The Opportunity of a Goodbye

What does Goodbye mean?

It is Trinity Sunday, and if you would like to hear an excellent sermon on the doctrine of the Trinity: watch Fr. Roldan's sermon at 9:00 a.m. Transitions, such as saying goodbye can cause us to feel lost and unsure who is in charge. This is because goodbyes are difficult, even in the best of situations. When someone says goodbye, it means that they are letting go of a person, sometimes they are letting go of a group of people, and there is a great deal of uncertainty. Personally, I like to have a plan, uncertainty is uncomfortable. Saying farewell is painful because the nature of relationships changes.

A well done goodbye is uncomfortable, it involves waiting for the Holy Spirit to take charge and move someone through setting up appropriate boundaries for the next steps. There are practical sides of moving forward: packing-up, seeing people that are special, putting away treasured items, cleaning, and leaving unfinished work for the next person who will fill the space one is leaving. And that is only leaving a curacy. There are not many days left, my friends.

As the disciples stood on that mountain in the Gospel reading, I can empathize with them, because I see Jesus in each of you. When you brought me flowers, I saw each of you celebrating my goodness. When you corrected my actions at the altar, I heard Jesus talking to the Pharisees in the temple. When you grieved with me, I saw Jesus weeping with Lazarus.

A large part of me does not want next Sunday to come: when I see the disciples on that mountain top I see them clinging to Christ Risen and not wanting to minister without the physical presence of Jesus. Baptisms are a type of goodbye, the idea of traditions that do not fit, are let go and with God, new beginnings occur.¹ God also promises that he will be with them always.

The same way someone sees God's promises at Baptism. The way it will be seen at Penny Layne's Baptism and throughout her life. You will see her embody Christ's spirit in her own way as a toddler, as a child, as a teenager, and as an adult. She will add something undeniable to Christ's creation.

Jesus continues his personal relationship with each disciple after leaving the mountaintop. The Holy Spirit continues to guide the disciples after they leave. The Father looks with compassion and perpetual guidance upon the followers. Jesus is telling the disciples to step into a new way of following him based on complete trust.² Alongside the Holy Spirit the disciples will bring more people to God than before.

The Commandment at Work

¹ Simultaneously, I recognize that with God, all things are possible. Jesus is with us in every struggle regardless of the depths and outcome. Jesus gives a farewell to the disciples in the gospel lesson.

² Venmo, M. (2023). <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/the-holy-trinity/commentary-on-matthew-2816-20-9>

Matthew's gospel is unique, because it ends with a specific directive and promise for all of Christ's followers. The promise is simple: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."³ Forever. Longer than any relationship that we can imagine. As long as eternity, Christ will be with those who are evangelizing and working on his behalf.

The disciples go out from being with Jesus to a new ministry. They are not confined to the Jewish Synagogues.⁴ Neither are they limited to the gentile world. In Matthew, Jesus speaks to a Jewish community and tells them that both ministry to Jews and Gentiles alike are needed. No one is outside the reach of Jesus.

Given that last week the church celebrated Pentecost, it is simple to see how this can happen: through the Holy Spirit. God has three parts of the same being that can give strength in ways that are unimaginable to human minds. The ending is the most important part in this text: we are always connected with God and because of that fact anything is possible. The rebirth that happens through baptism causes a deeper connection to the Creator.

St. Dunstan's living out The Great Commission

Last August, St. Dunstan's began a new service. At a time when many churches were shrinking, St. Dunstan's expanded the vision. Fr. Roldan observed his plate and said, yes, I think there is a sliver of room where I can add more to it. Then, Fr. Pinzon began his ministry and together you created more: Christian formation at spiritual retreats, youth service acolytes, baptisms, and worship. Instead of a scarcity mentality you leaned into the abundance of the Holy Spirit. St. Dunstan's is blessed with a vision of abundance instead of scarcity.

The disciples moved forward knowing that they would likely be parted from each other. Not every follower of Christ was called to serve in the same physical place. At the same time, every disciple was commanded, with the full authority of God the Father, to go forward and be connected by the same Spirit and belief.⁵ This means Christians in the pews (and watching from home) that the Trinity involves three parts of the same God: that is paradoxically one being and separate at the same time.

Each person knows how the command of Jesus, the savior moves our hearts, each individual recognizes when the Spirit calls them to go into unfamiliar territory, with comfort and guidance. I see the Trinity at work at St. Dunstan's. Moving forward, the 1:00 p.m. worship will continue to grow. Moving forward, I will continue to grow with all that you have taught me.

I recognize that in the service of God, I am not truly separated from you. All people on earth are equal as they come before God. The disciples received a great commission to minister to all

³ Matthew 28:20

⁴ Hare, D.R.A. (1993). *Matthew: Interpretation A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.

⁵ Both Hare, D.R.A. (1993). *Matthew: Interpretation A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox. & Saunders, C.D. (2021). *A Mediator in Matthew: An Analysis of the Son of Man's Function in the First Gospel*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications discussed the implication invoking God's authority at this point.

people, now you are sending me out to Rice University where I will carry the grace that you have shared with me. The first times that I celebrated the Eucharist, preached, and assisted at the altar, you showed patience as I found my voice, my command of the space, my leadership in formation, and my way forward as a priest.

Yes, there were times when I was corrected (privately and publicly), as was fitting to a curate. Yes, you were also patient, kind, and loving as I learned. It is the same grace many have shown to Fr. Pinzon and Fr. Roldan as they open the doors to St. Dunstan's, a broader community. Goodbyes are challenging. Yet they bring new opportunities and relationships. The disciples were not called to stay on the mountaintop forever. Jesus said to them in today's gospel, "Go." Go. It is how we begin baptism, with a ministry poised for growth.

We must all go where God calls us, and as we begin to say our goodbyes let us remember that the origin of goodbye is from the phrase God be with you.⁶

I am getting ready to tell all of you, God be with you: as you open the doors of St. Dunstan's wider, as you support Fr. Roldan, R. Pinzon, and the soon to be Deacon Louis in their ministry. With the leadership you have in place, you can find a way to never feel lost, and know that I am praying for God, the Creator, Christ, the Messiah, and The Holy Spirit to be with all of you at St. Dunstan's as you grow and as you go. Amen.

⁶ The original goodbye, dating from the 1570s, was godbwye, which was a contraction of the farewell phrase "God be with ye!"

<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/goodbye#:~:text=The%20original%20goodbye%2C%20dating%20from,Definitions%20of%20goodbye>