“*Carry On*”

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Have you heard of the “Carry On” films? These were a sequence of 31 low-budget British comedy motion pictures made between 1958 and 1992. They were all filmed at Pinewood Studios near Iver Heath, Buckinghamshire, England. The films satirized many British institutions and customs. Perhaps the two best known films in the series were “Carry On Nurse” in 1959 and “Carry On Cleo” in 1964. “Carry On Cleo” was a parody of the Burton and Taylor epic “Cleopatra” which came out in 1963. The main plot line of these films was a story of a small group of inept newcomers to a job who make comic mistakes, but come together to win in the end.

These films proved to be amazingly popular for low-budget films. Their popularity still carries on to this day. Perhaps the popularity is due to the main plot line, inept newcomers win in the end. Have you ever felt inept? No matter how hard you tried you never seemed to get it right, but in the end, you found your place and succeeded. I know I have felt this way. There have been times in my life where I set out to do something, but no matter my best intentions I made mistake after mistake, in retrospect with comic results.

Undaunted, I persevered still making mistakes but learning all the time. Sometimes, despite my mistakes I managed to get it right, with the help of a good team. As I matured and learned, the mistakes were fewer and the successes more frequent. But none of this would have been possible without the kind and patient guidance of mentors. Perhaps one of the most important things I learned was to be patient with others who were new, inexperienced and made mistakes. This experience, this learning pointed me to how I should live my life.

Out text today is part of the Johannine account of the Last Supper, often called Jesus’ Farewell Discourse. This discourse is narrated in five chapters, John 13-17. As throughout the Gospels, in these five chapters we see Jesus serving in his three offices of prophet, priest and king. Jesus is a prophet because he has come among us to speak the Word of God. He is a king because to him is given sovereignty of the world. He is a priest because he intercedes on our behalf with God the Father, offering a sacrifice of atonement, His own life, for our sins.

In chapters 13-16, Jesus explains to his disciples the significance of his departure and the life they will lead after his departure. But chapter 17 is not directed to the disciples. Chapter 17 is a prayer, Jesus prayer to God the Father. The disciples and we are privileged to overhear Jesus talking to God, but play no part in the conversation. This prayer is the prayer of a high priest interceding with God on behalf of the faith community.

In John, as in all the gospels, the disciples are displayed as somewhat inept and slow to learn. They keep making mistakes and fail to understand Jesus. Now the work the Father sent Jesus for is done and His life is about to end. For now, Jesus has taught the disciples all he can and they must carry on His work without his physical presence, guided by the Holy Spirit. Knowing that the disciples and those who will come after them have a difficult job, a job that the world will hate them for, Jesus speaks to God on their behalf, entrusting the hope of the future of his followers to God.

We must ask ourselves if we are willing to accept that like the disciples we too are an inept people prone to mistakes? God knows this, it is why he sent the Son to dwell among us, revealing God’s truth to us. With the end of Jesus’ life on earth, God knew that humanity still needed a teacher and guide. So God gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit to bear us up when we stumble and guide us when we fail to understand.

As the heirs of the disciples and all the saints who have followed them, acknowledging our own short comings, we are charged to carry on Jesus’ work. If we are reviled for the name of Christ, we must remain strong in God’s ways. If we suffer for our beliefs as many have and continue to this day, we must persevere. We persevere because we know we are blessed by the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God resting on us.

When we are called upon to act, we must act in God’s truth. We must humble ourself before God and submit to his guidance. We must not allow ourselves to be led onto other paths, but at every turn in the road follow God’s truth. We must not be deceived by the world that calls us to find comfort and support in idols crafted by humans. If we have problems and worries we know that our brothers and sisters in the whole world share them with us.

We must resist the world with all our strength, giving our cares to God who loves us. Though we may suffer for living God’s Word in our lives, remember that a time will come when God will exalt us. The promise of the world to come and life eternal has been given and will be kept. And because of that promise, what does God expect from us? The answer is simply and elegantly given in Micah 6:8. “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

God sent the Son to dwell among us for a time, bringing the Kingdom of God and the gift of Holy Truth. When we accept the gift of Holy Truth, though we live in a world beset by sin, we have the comfort of the presence of God. In God’s presence, we find that all feelings of fear, suffering, and separation have ended. Living in God’s ways, we discover our unity with God and realize that it has never been otherwise. Our Lord, Jesus the Christ, intercedes for us in all things and holds our lives in His hands. You are loved by God Almighty, creator, sustainer and ruler of all things. CARRY ON!