Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed, saying: “Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one. When I was with them I protected them in your name that you gave me, and I guarded them, and none of them was lost except the son of destruction, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you. I speak this in the world so that they may share my joy completely. I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth.”

Brief commentary:

Since the sixteenth century, this chapter has been called the "high priestly prayer" of Jesus. Today’s passage comes from the middle segment of this prayer. Jesus speaks as intercessor, with words addressed directly to the Father and not to the disciples. Yet the prayer is one of petition, for immediate and future disciples. Many phrases reminiscent of the Lord’s Prayer occur. Although still in the world, Jesus looks on his earthly ministry as a thing of the past. Whereas he has up to this time stated that the disciples could follow him, now he wishes them to be with him in union with the Father. This prayer for unity recalls the interconnectedness between the Father and the Son, and the Son and his disciples. Jesus spoke of it in the metaphor about the vine and the branches that we read on the 5th Sunday of Easter. Knowing the difficulties the disciples will face in their mission, Jesus prays that through his death, the disciples might remain firm in the truth.

Today’s reading offers three significant messages:

- The action of looking up to heaven and calling God Father are typical of Jesus at prayer.
- With this prayer, Jesus sent his disciples forth in the world.
- Jesus’ ascension ends his time on earth but not his presence among us as the risen Christ. The ascension initiates the process of evangelization to all peoples and nations.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

1. How am I living out my mission to be a disciple of Christ in today’s world?
2. What is my understanding of not belonging to “the world”?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 611; 858; 2466; 2747-2750; 2812-2815; 2850.