

Come, with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
and in that bond of mutual love,
make and keep us one.

Grant that we may abide in you,
and find our fulfilment in that threefold life
which was before the world was made,
and remains, for ever and ever.

Collect for Easter 7, Year C³

Lectionary-based Catechesis • Year C

The Seventh Sunday of Easter

Principal Service readings

Acts 16.16-34	Paul and Silas are imprisoned and then miraculously released
Psalms 97	The Lord is king, let the earth rejoice
Revelation 22.12-14,16-17,20-21	The Alpha and the Omega; the Lord is coming soon
John 17.20-26	Jesus prays that his disciples may know God's love and glory

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The prayer of Jesus

²⁰ 'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

²⁵ 'Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.'

John 17.20-26 NRSV¹

³ *Celebrating the Christian Year : Prayers and Resources for Sunday, Holy Days and Festivals : Years A, B and C / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004-5.*

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

This is the Sunday after Ascension Day and the themes of the glorification of Christ and of his continuing presence continue.

Jesus prays on behalf of his disciples; he prays for future disciples (v.20); the Letter to the Hebrews tells us that 'he lives for ever to intercede for them' (7.25).

This final prayer of Jesus is like a last will and testament, and it both asks and answers the question: 'Who does Jesus pray for, what does he pray for, and why does he pray for it?'. He prays for Christian unity: 'that they may all be one' (vv.21,22,23); this is not an end in itself, but for witness: 'that the world may know that you have sent me' (v.23). If we had to make a final prayer what would we include?

Jesus has shared everything with his disciples, even his glory (v.22). What is this glory? Is it honour and blessing, or perhaps his presence in a noticeable way? – the Spirit is his presence.²

Although Jesus speaks of leaving his disciples, he also prays that they may be with him, to see his glory in heaven after his departure from this world (v.24).

This prayer summarizes Jesus' mission and goal: to show the way to the Father, to continue his mission through his disciples, and to share his glory with them, both now and in the future.

In John's presentation of the message of Jesus, it is not simply the words of this new community, the church, about Jesus and his message and meaning that will have impact, but the very fact of *being* community – that is, the type of community they actually are. The unity that he desires for his disciples will come about as a result of the Holy Spirit. Might John be concerned about Christian unity because of some differences or divisions among Christians of the time? What are the effects of Christian unity and community in the world?

² *Reading John* / Charles H. Talbert. – New York : Crossroad, 1992. p.229.

Quotations

1

In order to be united we must love one another, to love one another we must know one another, to know one another we must meet one another.

Désiré-Félicien-François-Joseph Cardinal Mercier 1851–1926

2

He is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7.25

3

There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart. For it is from renewal of the inner life of our minds (cf. Eph.4.24), from self-denial and an unstinted love that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way. We should therefore pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace to be genuinely self-denying, humble, gentle in the service of others, and to have an attitude of brotherly generosity towards them.

Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, (21 November 1964), sec. 7

Related topics

For further study:

Passion/Death/Resurrection/Sending of the Spirit – paschal mystery; Holy Spirit; Jesus Christ; Father; Trinity; Mystery of the Church; Christian unity

Closing Prayer

Christ, bright morning star,
raised and exalted in glory:
come, as you have promised.