

Seventh Sunday of Easter Year C

John 17:20-26

20 Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said:

'Holy Father, I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. 21 May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. 22 I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. 23 With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you love me.

24 Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am so that they may always see the glory you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

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

Other readings: Acts 7:55-60 Psalm 96 (97) Apocalypse 22:12-14,16-17,20

On this Sunday before Pentecost we complete our readings from the words of Jesus in John's gospel set in the context of the Last Supper, on the night before Jesus died. This is the final section of a prayer Jesus directs to the Father. He raises his eyes to heaven and prays to the Father for unity.

Jesus prays not only for those who have followed him up to this point. He prays too for the people to whom they will bring the gospel message. Our awareness of the history of the early Church confirms that from the very start there were divisions and differences in attitudes which could be very strongly held.

Jesus prays for a pervasive unity among the disciples, that all may be one in a unity which reflects the relationship of Jesus with the Father, and the Trinitarian nature of God which is gradually being understood by the early Christians. Through this unity others will come to believe.

Jesus speaks of the glory given him by the Father which he in turn makes known to believers. Jesus has made the name of God, another word pointing to God's very essence, known to the disciples, so that they should be one in love. The ultimate gift of the Risen Jesus is love.

How can these final words of Christ's prayer inspire our daily lives?

What can we do to protect the unity of those who believe and to avoid division and discord?

We pray that we may be faithful to the truth we have come to know from Jesus.

We pray that generous love may always be a feature of Christian life.