

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, May 20th 2015

That We May Be One

"Holy Father, keep in your name those you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one. . . . I pray not only for these [the Apostles], but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. . . . that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me. . . . I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them." (Verses from John 17:11-26)

These words, taken from our gospel readings from today and tomorrow, are from Jesus's farewell address at the end of His last supper with His apostles. They are often referred to as Our Lord's "Priestly Prayer." But note that the Lord is not addressing the apostles. He is addressing God our Father in prayer. They point to the mutuality, intimacy, and reciprocity which now define the unity shared between the Father, Jesus, and our community of Faith, the Church -- a union of love, in love, and through love. In the mutual indwelling between the Father, His Son, and us, then, there will be love, joy, peace, patience and longsuffering.

Love moves to the heart of the character and identity of God. This love of the Father for the Son, from the time of the Apostles right up to the present, has breathed the life of Faith into the Community of the Church. On account of this divine love, we are the locus of God's love in the world, just as the incarnate Word was the locus of Jesus's ultimate enactment of that love in the gift of his life from the cross.

Notice that in this prayer, Jesus entrusts the future of the Apostles and the Church to our Father. It is a striking move. Instead of entrusting the Community's future to the Community itself, Jesus entrusts that future to God. The Lord's words are not last-minute instructions about what should be done in Jesus's absence: His words turn the future of the community over to God our Father.

Our gospels for today and tomorrow are an occasion for us, all of us – the faithful and our leadership – to remember, recognize and realize with full attention that we are, in this moment, personally and all at once united in the Mystical Body of Christ. This is what constitutes our union of hearts and minds. This is the meaning and power of our identity as Christians. We are His Church. We are His community.

As Our Lord sends us into the world, we must – through Him, with Him, and in Him – be a light to the world. The world needs this light. We are called to guide those who inhabit it into the fullness of God's own Kingdom. And we must do so not in the abstract, but tangibly, palpably, and visibly in our homes, our neighborhoods, and the actual places and circumstances where we live and move and have our being. This is what it means to be a Christian.

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