

# *Thursday of the Seventh Week of Easter May 28th*

**READING: John 17:20-26**

‘I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 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. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 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. 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.

‘Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. 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.’

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## **REFLECTION**

Poignantly, Jesus turns his attention to us with these words. Neither Jesus nor John had some sort of clairvoyant glimpse into life in downtown Tuatapere or Omarama in a Covid-conscious twenty-first century, of course. True, the propensity of our triune God to render time meaningless by creating it in the first place *could* give each

Person of the Trinity some chronological advantage, but I suspect the doctrine of kenosis, the “self-emptying of the Son” as depicted in Phil. 2:6-11, would preclude Jesus from having that sort of time-twisting extra insight.

But Jesus and John alike knew deep compassion, knew the struggles that many after them would experience as we wrestle with the 95% disbelief that I mentioned earlier this week.

Remember that for Jesus to engage in prayer is in a sense an unnecessary extra, merely there to guide our prayers. He and God are one. Yet in this prayer Jesus wraps us into his self and into his self’s union with the one he addresses as *patēr*: “I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one.” Jesus is one with the one most of us normally address as “Father” (but can call by many other holy names). Jesus remarkably asks that we may be one with him in his oneness with the First Person of the Trinity, with God the Creator, God the Judge, God the Father and Mother of us all.

What is this oneness? Certainly it is not uniformity, as I have alluded previously, not all alike as if in some hideous cloning cult. The clue to the meaning of “unity” is to present in the long, and in Greek complex sentence of which the petition is a part. “So that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me ... completely one ... so that the world may believe.” This kind of unity transcends difference and disagreement. Can we witness to our love for one another despite differences over liturgy, sexuality, biblical interpretation? Our track record is not great.

In many ways, I wonder if our witness to the world, in Fourth Gospel terms, isn’t far more to do with how we navigate our differences than strive for similarities? Few of us are capable of negotiating personalities and theological (and other) differences on our own. Or maybe I’m the only prickly person in the Body of Christ! But it seems to me that in this time of the *Thy Kingdom Come* novena initiative, we could do worse than to pray that the Spirit of Unity, summoned as it were by Jesus in his Farewell Prayer, infiltrate our lives of love to one another. Come, Spirit, heighten, sharpen the integrity of our witness to the world around us so that one day we might with integrity sing “they’ll know we are Christians by our love.”