



Living the Gospel



SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER — May 16, 2010

Theme: "The glory which thou has given me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one"

Gathering Prayer

All: Father, help us keep in mind that Christ our Savior lives with you in glory and promised to remain with us until the end of time. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives, and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 17:20-26

²⁰ I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. ²² The glory which thou has given me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast give me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee; and these know that thou has sent me. ²⁶ I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Gospel Notes

20. Christ prays for the Church, for all those who, over the course of centuries, will believe in him through the preaching of the Apostles. "That divine mission, which was committed by Christ to the Apostles, is destined to last until the end of the world (cf. Mt 28:20), since the Gospel, which they were charged to hand on, is, for the Church, the principle of all its life for all time. For that very reason the Apostles were careful to appoint successors in this hierarchically constituted society" (Vatican II *Lumen gentium*, 20).

The apostolic origin and basis of the Church is what is termed its "apostolicity", a special characteristic of the Church which we confess in the Creed. Apostolicity consists in the Pope and Bishops being successors of Peter and the Apostles, holding the authority of the Apostles and proclaiming the same teaching as they did. "The sacred synod teaches that the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the Apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ (. Lk 10:15)" (Vatican II, *Lumen gentium*, 20).

21. Union of Christians with Christ begets unity among themselves. This unity if the Church ultimately redounds to the benefit of all mankind, because since the Church is one and unique, she is seen as a sign raised up for the nations to see, inviting all to believe in Christ as sent by God come to save all men. The Church carries on this mission of salvation through its union with Christ and the Father.

The Second Vatican Council, speaking of the principles of ecumenism, links the Church's unity with her universality: "Almost everyone, though in different ways, longs for the one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal and sent forth to the whole world that the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God. (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 1). This universality is another characteristic of the Church, technically described as "catholicity." "For many centuries now the Church has been spread throughout the world, and it numbers persons of all races and walks of life. But the universality for the Church does not depend on its geographical distribution, even though this is a visible sign and a motive for credibility. The Church was catholic already at Pentecost: it was born catholic from the wounded heart of Jesus, as a fire which the Holy Spirit enkindled.

"In the second century the Christians called the Church catholic in order to distinguished it from sects which, using the name Christ, were betraying his doctrine in one way or the another. 'We call it catholic', writes St Cyril, not only because it is spread throughout the world, from one extreme to the other, but because in a universal way and without defect it teaches all the dogmas which men ought to know, of both visible and the invisible, the celestial and the earthly. Likewise because it draws to true worship all types of men, governors and citizens, the learned and the ignorant. And finally, because it cures and heals all kinds of sins, whether of soul or of

the body, possessing in addition-by whatever name it may be called-all the forms of virtue, in deeds and in words and in every kind of spiritual life' (*Catechesis*, 18, 23)" (J. Escriva, *In Love with the Church*, 9).

Every Christian should have the same desire for this unity as Jesus Christ expresses in his prayer to the Father: "A privileged instrument for participation in pursuit of the unity of all Christians is prayer. Jesus Christ himself left us his final wish for unity through prayer to the Father that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou has sent me' (Jn 17:21).

Also the Second Vatican Council strongly recommended to us prayer for the unity of Christians, defining it the soul of the whole ecumenical movement' (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 8). As the soul to the body, so prayer gives life, consistency, spirit, and finality to the ecumenical movement.

"Prayer puts us, first and foremost, before the Lord, purifies us in intentions, in sentiments, in our heart, and produces that 'interior conversation', without which there is no real ecumenism. (cf. *Unitatis redintegratio*, 7).

"Prayer, furthermore, reminds us that unity, ultimately, is a gift from God, a gift for which we must ask and for which we must prepare in order that we may be granted it" (John Paul II, *General Audience*, 17 January 1979).

22-23. Jesus possess glory, a manifestation of divinity, because he is God, equal to the Father (cf. note on Jn 17: 1-5). When he says that he is giving his disciples this glory, he is indicating that through grace he makes us partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). Glory and justification by grace are very closely united, as we can see from the Sacred Scripture: "Those whom he predestined he also called, those whom he called he also justified, and those he justified he also glorified" (Rom 8:30). The change grace works in Christians makes us ever more like Christ, who is the likeness of the Father (cf. 2 Cor 4:4; Heb 1:2-3): by communicating his glory Christ joins the faithful to God by giving them a share in supernatural life, which is the source of the holiness of Christians and the Church: "Now we can understand better how [...] one of the principal aspects of her holiness is that unity centered on the mystery on the one triune God. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all' (Eph 4:4-6)" (J Escriva, *In Love with the Church*, 5).

24. Jesus concludes his prayer by asking that all Christians attain the blessedness of heaven. The word he uses, "I desire", "I pray", indicates that he is asking for the most important thing of all, for what this Father wants-that all may be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim 2:4): which is essentially the mission of the Church-the salvation of souls.

As long as we are on earth we share God's life through knowledge (faith) and love (charity); but only in heaven will we attain the fullness of this

supernatural life, when we see God as he is (cf. 1 Jn 3:2), face to face (cf. 1 Cor 13: 9-12). Therefore, the Church has her sights fixed on eternity, she is eschatological: that is, by having in this world all the resources necessary for teaching God's truth, for rendering him true worship and communicating the life of grace, she keeps alive people's hope of attaining the fullness of eternal life: "The Church, to which we are all called in Christ Jesus, and in which by the grace of God we acquire holiness, will receive holiness, will receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven, when will come the time of the renewal of all things (Acts 3:21). At that time, together with the human race, the universe itself, which is so closely related to man and which attains its destiny through him, will be perfectly reestablished in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10; Col 1:20; 2 Pet 3 :10-13)" (Vatican, *Lumen gentium*, 48).

25-26. God's revelation of himself through Christ causes us to begin to share in the divine life, a sharing which will reach its climax in heaven: "God alone can give us right and full knowledge of this reality by revealing himself as the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, in whose eternal life we are by grace called to share, here below in the obscurity of faith and after death in eternal light. (Paul VI, *Creed of the People of God*).

Christ has revealed to us all we need to know in order to participate in the mutual love of the divine Persons-primarily, the mystery of who he is and what his mission is and, with that, the mystery of God himself ("I made known to them thy name"), thus fulfilling what he had announced: "No one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt 11:27).

Christ continues to make known his Father's love, by means of the Church, in which he is always present: "I am with you always, to the end of age" (Mt 28: 20).

Gospel Reflection

The Little Prince, by French author Antoine de Saint-Exupery, is a classic work that tells a tale of a little prince from a far-off world who comes to earth searching for happiness. He finally chances upon a wise fox who teaches him about friendship. When the Little Prince is about ready to return to his planet, the fox says good-bye by telling him a secret: "it is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." For all the time Jesus has spent with his disciples (and, no doubt, he had many an intimate moment), perhaps the one recorded in this Sunday's gospel is the most telling. Jesus is preparing to say good bye to his disciples, and he lets them through his prayer see intimately into his own heart. The 'secret' Jesus reveals is how much he loves us and that he desires for us the same love and unity that he and the Father share.

Prayer reveals the deepest desire of our hearts and our truest selves. As Jesus prays in this gospel, we learn what is deepest in his heart. What is more, Jesus' prayer teaches us that in the unity we share as the one Body of Christ we already participate in Jesus' glory-this because by being the one Body of Christ we share in his identity and so also are already united with the Trinity in all its glory. Jesus' prayer reminds us that being a disciple means that we already share in Jesus' glory. Whether we are disciples who give our lives for Christ, as did Stephen in the first reading, or whether we are disciples who plod along as faithful witnesses to Christ in the ordinary circumstances of daily living, the result is the same: we are the Father's gift to Jesus, we are intimately loved into a union with God and each other, and we already share in divine glory.

In this intimate prayer of Jesus before his suffering and death, we see clearly how much Jesus sustains us in our discipleship. Our peek into what is deepest in Jesus' heart encourages us. The gift of the Spirit that we receive helps us see who we are to be as the one body of Christ: those whose lives are spent in self-sacrificing surrender for the sake of others. Our glory lies in imitating Jesus, knowing that dying to self leads to risen life.

Truly, Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper is not only for the disciples who were present with him but also for us. In this very heartfelt prayer, Jesus reveals the intimacy he enjoys with his Father-the same intimacy he desires with and for his disciples (and us). Such a love! Such a unity! Such a gift! Such a life!

Living the Paschal Mystery

Most often when we think of living the paschal mystery we think in terms of the concrete self-surrendering acts we undertake in order to live the dying and rising mystery of Christ. The Gospel for this Sunday affords us an opportunity to reflect on a completely different kind of self-surrender that of giving ourselves over to God in the intimacy of prayer. Just as Jesus' prayer reveals us as sharing in his love for and unity with the Father, our prayer reveals both our love for and union with God and our love for and union with each other. Just as Jesus was prompted in his prayer to look not to him but to the well being of his disciples, our prayers draws us out of ourselves toward God and concern for others. Thus, prayer itself is a kind of self-sacrificing surrender for others.

New and Old Testament links

First Reading — Acts 7: 55-60

⁵⁵ But he, filled with the holy Spirit, looked up intently to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, ⁵⁶ and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." ⁵⁷ But they cried out in a loud voice, covered their ears, and rushed upon him together. ⁵⁸ They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them"; and when he said this, he fell asleep.

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 97:1-2, 6-7, 9

¹ The LORD is king; let the earth rejoice; let the many islands be glad. ² Cloud and darkness surround the Lord; justice and right are the foundation of his throne. ...

⁶ The heavens proclaim God's justice; all peoples see his glory. ⁷ All who serve idols are put to shame, who glory in worthless things; all gods bow down before you.

⁹ You, LORD, are the Most High over all the earth, exalted far above all gods.

Second Reading — Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20

¹² "Behold, I am coming soon. I bring with me the recompense I will give to each according to his deeds. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." ¹⁴ Blessed are they who wash their robes so as to have the right to the tree of life and enter the city through its gates. ...

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star." ¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let the hearer say, "Come." Let the one who thirsts come forward, and the one who wants it receive the gift of life-giving water. ...

²⁰ The one who gives this testimony says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

Catechism of the Catholic Church

589. Jesus gave scandal above all when he identified his merciful conduct toward sinners with God's own attitude toward them. (Cf. *Mt* 9:13; *Hos* 6:6) He went so far as to hint that by sharing the table of sinners he was admitting them to the messianic banquet. (Cf. *Lk* 15:1-2, 22-32) But it was most especially by forgiving sins that Jesus placed the religious authorities of Israel on the horns of a dilemma. Were they not entitled to demand in consternation, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (*Mk* 2:7) By forgiving sins Jesus either is blaspheming as a man who made himself God's equal, or is speaking the truth and his person really does make present and reveal God's name. (Cf. *Jn* 5:18; 10:33; 17:6, 26.)

820. "Christ bestowed unity on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time." Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her. This is why Jesus himself prayed at the hour of his Passion, and does not cease praying to his Father, for the unity of his disciples: "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, . . . so that the world may know that you have sent me." (*Jn* 17:21; cf. *Heb* 7:25) The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit.

2750. By entering into the holy name of the Lord Jesus we can accept, from within, the prayer he teaches us: "Our Father!" His priestly prayer fulfills, from within, the great petitions of the Lord's Prayer: concern for the Father's name; (Cf. *Jn* 17:6,11,12,26.) passionate zeal for his kingdom (glory); (Cf. *Jn* 17:1,5,10,22,23-26.) the accomplishment of the will of the Father, of his plan of salvation; (Cf. *Jn* 17:2,4,6,9,11,12,24) and deliverance from evil. (Cf. *Jn* 17:15.)

2751. Finally, in this prayer Jesus (Cf. *Jn* 17:3,6-10,25.) reveals and gives to us the "knowledge," inseparably one, of the Father and of the Son, (which is the very mystery of the life of prayer.

2812. Finally, in Jesus the name of the Holy God is revealed and given to us, in the flesh, as Savior, revealed by what he is, by his word, and by his sacrifice. (Cf. *Mt* 1:21; *Lk* 1:31; *Jn* 8:28; 17:8; 17:17-19.) This is the heart of his priestly prayer: "Holy Father . . . for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth." (*Jn* 17:11,19) Because he "sanctifies" his own name, Jesus reveals to us the name of the Father. (Cf. *Ezek* 20:39; 36:20-21; *Jn* 17:6) At the end of Christ's Passover, the Father gives him the name that is above all names: "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Sharing and Discussion

1. Describe the "The glory which ... I have given to them".
2. How would you explain to another the importance of Jesus' being sent from the Father?
3. If you were to embrace verses 25 and 26 as your "life verses" what effect would it have on how you live?

Closing Prayer

All: Almighty, ever living God, you have given the human race Jesus Christ our Savior as a model of love. He fulfilled your will by becoming man and giving his life on the cross. Help us to bear witness to you by following his example of suffering and make us worthy to share in his resurrection. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

Saturday 10am - 12pm at Church of The Holy Cross (room #03-06)

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