

We are now approaching the final week of the Easter Season. Pentecost marks the end of the Easter Season, and indeed the end of the commemoration of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Holy Spirit. The Gospel today, is from Jesus' great prayer which he made at the end of the Last Supper. This prayer is important for us his disciples.

A woman named Louise Cramer tells the story of opening gifts at the baby shower for her first child. Among all the necessities and toys, Louise found one very special gift. It was a baby quilt meticulously embroidered by her grandmother, who had passed away years before. As Louise marveled over the beauty of the quilt, it hit her that her grandmother had planned this quilt, and spent weeks stitching it together, long before Louise got married. Louise's grandmother planned this very special gift for a future great-grandchild she would never see.

In the same way, Jesus prayed for us. He prayed for his disciples, and then he prayed for all those people he had never met, people who hadn't even been born yet, generations of people yet to be born who would come to believe in him as their Lord and Savior. In other words, in his last hours on earth, Jesus prayed for you and me.

Jesus prayed for his friends. He prayed that they would be strong. **He also prayed that they would be united.** "Protect them in your name that you have given me," he prayed, "so that they may be one, as we are one." That is such an important message for us. We are not simply a collection of individuals. We are the body of Christ. It is so vitally important that we in the church pull together, that we are united.

Too many things can disrupt the unity of a church. People get upset with the decisions of a diocese. Or people get upset with the pastor. Jesus knew that it is not easy to maintain unity among a talented, yet sometimes difficult group of people. He also knew, however, that we can never accomplish the things that he has called us to accomplish if we do not pull together. Unity does not come easily. It requires humility and a shared vision. And most of all, unity requires prayer. When we align our will with the will of God, when we align our character with the character of Jesus, then we will operate in a spirit of unity.

A hundred years ago Rev. Charles E. Jefferson described the difference between an audience and a church. He said, "*An audience is a crowd. A church is a family. An audience is a*

gathering. A church is a fellowship. An audience is a collection. A church is an organism. An audience is a heap of stones. A church is a temple." And he concludes, "Preachers are ordained not to attract an audience, but to build a church." Christian unity is not determined by whether we agree with each other about every interpretation of scripture or doctrine or form of church government. Christian unity is determined by whether we love one another, and whether we reflect the love of God in Christ for the world.

In a world where there are so many divisions, the effective Christian community brings different individuals and groups together in a loving community where there is total acceptance and deep mutual respect and an ability to work together for the living out of the Gospel. such unity is very striking and leads many to ask: "What makes these people stick? How do they manage to get on together so well?" And the answer is: **their faith in Jesus Christ and their commitment to his vision of life.** As a result, some are bound to ask: "Can I join this group too?"

The second part of Jesus' prayer to the Father is sharing His glory. "The glory you have given me I have given them." The glory that belonged to Jesus on earth was his **humility and spirit of service, the emptying of himself.** For this, he was raised to the highest place on the right hand of the Father. This same glory will be ours too if we are like him and if, among ourselves, and in our personal lives we reflect the spirit of service and love.

Three people were discussing some recent translations of the Bible. One said, "I like the new American version. It is so much clearer than the older versions and is so much easier to read." The second said, "I like the Jerusalem Bible. It is not only clearer, but it's more poetic, which makes it more suitable in prayer." The third said, "I like my mother's translation best of all. She translated the Bible into actions, which makes it so much easier to apply to daily life.

We write a new page of the gospel each day by the things that we do, and the words that we say. People read what we write, whether faithful or true. We may be the only gospel some people will ever read; they may never buy the books. Let us write the life of Jesus. As we wait and pray for a rekindling of the fire of divine love in the hearts of the faithful at Pentecost, let us all resolve, in our own little ways, to work for the realization of the full unity of all Christians for which Jesus prayed.

God Bless You.