

Sunday Message

7TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

THE WORD

Year C • 1 June 2025 • Psalter Week 3

THAT ALL MAY BE ONE

JOHN 17:20-26

In today's Gospel, Jesus prays for his disciples, that they may be one. In fact, in his discourses with his disciples, he expresses this desire a total of four times, showing its importance to him. He prays for his disciples present with him that day, and for us too, that all may be one "as you, Father, are in me, and I in you... that the world may believe."

Jesus knew the future would be challenging for his disciples, that major arguments and divisions among them would send the wrong message to the world. So they must remain united through their love for him and for each other. Love is the key to unity. ■

SAY

"Thank you, Lord, for the gift of faith. Help me to share it with others. Amen."

DO

Learn a little more about your neighbours from other Christian churches.

PRAY

Pray for Christians everywhere, that they will seek to break down the barriers that divide them.

LEARN

Ecumenical relations are not simply a question of being courteous to each other, but of moving towards real unity.

REFLECT

In the early 1960s, my mother trained greyhounds and brought them to race meetings nationwide. Early one Sunday, she and her brother travelled to Dublin for a meeting in Shelbourne Park Greyhound Stadium.

As good Catholics, they needed to fulfil their Sunday obligation but they were unfamiliar with the city and its churches. As they walked through the city centre, they spotted a church that people were entering. They rushed inside, found a pew, genuflected, blessed themselves, and knelt down.

But, very quickly, it dawned on them that they weren't in a Catholic church at all and they had made a terrible mistake.

They departed as unobtrusively as they could, and continued their search until they found a Catholic church. But they were mortified and worried – because they feared they had committed a grave sin.

Fast forward to Holy Week 2013. A retreat for Holy Week was preached in Zion Church of Ireland parish church in Rathgar, Dublin, by a visiting Roman Catholic priest. That guest preacher was me. The rector had invited me to preach during that most solemn week, and I was delighted to accept.

What a contrast between that event and my mother's experience half a century earlier. What made the contrast possible was Vatican II.

In 1964 the Second Vatican Council adopted the Decree on Ecumenism. It was a major step forward for the Catholic Church, because it meant that for the first time the Church began to take ecumenism seriously.

The goal of ecumenism, according to the Decree, is the full unity of all Christians in a single communion. It states that an

imperfect communion already exists among Christians because of their shared faith in Christ, their practice of baptism, their use of the same scriptures, and many other bonds. But the purpose of ecumenism is to eliminate divisions until such time as all Christians may be one, in keeping with the prayer of Jesus in today's Gospel.

Steady progress towards unity has been made in the decades since the Council. Agreements have been reached with other churches on the fundamental nature of baptism and eucharist and on the question of justification by faith. There is also greater collaboration between the Christian churches at local level, and between the Christian churches and peoples of other faiths.

Vatican II was the catalyst for so much progress that would have been unthinkable barely six decades ago, yet we know that much remains to be achieved.

Today's Gospel reminds us of Jesus' wish that "all may be one". He wants all his followers to be one. And so we are called to work to bring the Christian churches closer together and make unity a reality. Ecumenism isn't just a nice, pious thought. There is an urgency to it.

Second, it reminds us that while the ecumenical movement has brought about huge changes since Vatican II, major challenges remain. Some Catholics regard any serious dialogue with the Protestant churches as compromising on the truth, which they believe the Catholic Church alone has in all its fullness. Some Protestants fear that the ecumenical movement is about Protestants bending the knee to Rome, and are suspicious of the Catholic Church.

Many ecumenists are frustrated over the failure to address doctrines, laws and attitudes which seem to hold the churches back rather than draw them together. More effort is needed by people at all levels of the Church.

Third, it reminds us of all that we have in common. All Christians worship the same God, profess the same creed, have the same canon of scripture, share the same mission to preach the Gospel. Far more unites us than divides us. We need to stand together on what we have in common – the faith we share and the Gospel we preach.

We need to think also of what people of all religions have in common. We all believe in a God who created us and loves us. It's important to remember this in this time when militant atheism is on the rise. People of faith need to work together in a secular society that's becoming more hostile to religion.

We cannot bring about Christian unity on our own, but we can do our bit. We can pray for unity between Christians, and pray for our leaders in their efforts to promote greater unity. And we could attend one another's liturgies, or joint liturgies, occasionally. Unlike my mother all those years ago, we needn't be afraid to extend the open hand of friendship. This is how we can join in the prayer of Jesus, that they all may be one. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*O Lord, hear my voice, for I have called to you;
of you my heart has spoken: Seek his face;
hide not your face from me, alleluia.*

COLLECT

Graciously hear our supplications, O Lord,
so that we, who believe that the Saviour of the human race
is with you in your glory,
may experience, as he promised,
until the end of the world,
his abiding presence among us.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Acts 7:55-60

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

In those days: Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 97(96):1, 2b, 6, 7c, 9. R. 1a, 9b

R: The Lord is king, most high above all the earth.

Or Alleluia.

1. The LORD is king, let earth rejoice;
let the many islands be glad.
Justice and right are the foundation of his throne. **R.**
2. The skies proclaim his justice;
all peoples see his glory.
All you angels, worship him. **R.**
3. For you indeed are the LORD,
most high above all the earth,
exalted far above all gods. **R.**

SECOND READING Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20

A reading from the book of Revelation.

I, John, heard a voice saying to me, 'Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.' Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

'I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.'

The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.'
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL cf. John 14:18

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

I will not leave you as orphans, says the Lord.

I am going away and I will come to you,
and your hearts will rejoice.

R: Alleluia.

GOSPEL John 17:20-26

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

At that time: Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and praying said,
'Holy Father,

I do not ask for these only,

but also for those who will believe in me through their word,
that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you,
that they also may be in us,

so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

The glory that you have given me I have given to them,
that they may be one even as we are one,

I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one,
so that the world may know that you sent me
and loved them even as you loved me.

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me,
may be with me where I am,

to see my glory that you have given me

because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you,
I know you, and these know that you have sent me.

I made known to them your name,

and I will continue to make it known,

that the love with which you have loved me may be in them,
and I in them.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, O Lord, the prayers of your faithful
with the sacrificial offerings,
that through these acts of devotedness
we may pass over to the glory of heaven.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Father, I pray that they may be one
as we also are one, alleluia.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Hear us, O God our Saviour,
and grant us confidence,
that through these sacred mysteries
there will be accomplished in the body of the whole Church
what has already come to pass in Christ her Head.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.