

Closing Prayer

God our Father,
glorify your Son
in the lives of the people called by his name.

Through no merit of ours, you have made us your own,
to be your witnesses on earth.

Keep us true to the name we bear,
that people everywhere may know
that you are the God and lover of us all.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers, Easter 7A²

CPL • LBC Year A Easter 7.odt • 2020-05-11

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary* / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999,

The Seventh Sunday of Easter

Principal Service readings

Acts 1.6-14	The Ascension; the disciples return to Jerusalem
Psalm 68.1-10,32-35 [or 68.1-10]	The power and blessing of God's presence
1 Peter 4.12-14; 5.6-11	Be humble, trust God, resist evil
John 17.1-11	Jesus prays for protection for his disciples as his hour draws close

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The prayer of Jesus

¹Jesus looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

⁶'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.'

Comments and Questions

Today we hear part of the final prayer of Jesus from St John's Gospel. The prayer itself is three chapters long (chapters 15 – 17). It concludes on a rather startling note when Jesus says he is not praying for the world but 'for those you have given me'. He says that he will no longer be in the world, but that his disciples will be in the world.

Earlier in the gospel we had been told that 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son' (3.16), but now the focus is on the companions of Jesus. There is a greater sense of intimacy and also of impending change, as the story moves towards the betrayal.

'The hour has come', Jesus says, an hour long expected (see 12.23, 27; 13.1). Jesus prays for God's glory to be shown – John has said at the beginning of the gospel 'we have seen his glory' (1.14). Then we have the famous definition of eternal life: 'eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God' (17.3). The word for 'know' signifies not a grasp of truth but personal acquaintance. It is experienced on entering into a personal relationship with God, knowing the God revealed by Jesus. The addition of: 'and Jesus Christ whom you have sent', may be an indication of an editorial insertion. The purpose of Jesus 'coming to earth was to complete the task the Father gave him, This task has now been completed, Jesus says (v.4), and so a decisive turning point in the story has been reached (v.5). Jesus then asks to be restored to the Father's presence with the glory he had before the world was made (v.5), but this can only happen through the 'hour' of the 'lifting up'.

If the hour has come, and its completion will not be achieved until Jesus passes through it, how can he claim to have perfected the task given him by the Father (v.4)? The answer is given by pointing to the fragile group of disciples sharing his table (vv. 6-8). This has come about only on the initiative of God. Jesus' positive assessment of the disciples cannot have derived from their achievements. The disciples have been made clean by the word of Jesus (cf. 13.10; 15.3), they abide in Jesus and in God as Jesus abides in God (cf. 15.9-10), and they know that everything that Jesus has

passed on to them is from God (v.7; cf. 15.15). They have come to believe that Jesus is sent by God (v.8).

Jesus now addresses the situation in which the disciples will find themselves (vv.9-11). He is about to depart but they will remain. He asks the 'holy Father' to be father to them. Jesus' mission to the world has come to an end, but that of the disciples is about to begin (v.11). Why is there such an emphasis on unity? – 'that they may be one'.

Quotations

1

In order to unite with one another, we must love one another; in order to love one another, we must know one another; in order to know one another, we must go and meet one another.

Cardinal Mercier, c.1920

2

Take heed to come together often to give thanks to God and show forth his praise. For when you assemble frequently in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed and the destruction at which he aims is prevented by the unity of your faith. Nothing is more precious than peace, by which all war, both in heaven and earth, is brought to an end.

Letter to the Ephesians 13 / Ignatius, d.108

3

To gather with God's people in united adoration of the Father is as necessary to the Christian life as prayer.

Martin Luther, 1483–1546

Related topics

For further study:

Pascal mystery; christology; Holy Spirit; church; ecclesiology; baptism; confirmation; Eucharist; cost of discipleship

¹ New Revised Standard Version Bible is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.