

Seventh Sunday of Easter, Year A, Junior High

Submitted by lectionaryadmin on Mon, 07/29/2013 - 20:00

Junior High Session

Acts 1:12-14

John 17:1-11

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Creator God, you made us with the desire to be with others.

Help us always seek to be in harmony with those around us.

May our prayers, words, and actions be united in love for you.

Let others see in us the great love you have for your Son and for all of creation.

We make our prayer in the name of the Father,

the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Opening Life Reflection

Form a circle of all participants. Using a ball of yarn or twine, toss the ball from member to member allowing a great web to be created. The person tossing the ball of yarn will say the name of the person receiving the ball and at the same time mention one thing the "tosser" has said or done recently to show God's love. After an established period of time or set number of tosses, stop and consider the web. Share ideas for the following questions:

- How is the web a reflection of our unity in God's family?
- What is the significance of the things mentioned that formed our web?
- What actions or deeds could we do to make our web even stronger?

Listening to the Word of God

After Jesus ascended to God his friends returned to Jerusalem. They join together in the same upper room where they ate the Last Supper. They pray together and wait to see what happens next.

Read Acts 1:12-14

Allow for silence

Scripture Discussion Starters

- Of all the things the apostles could have done when they returned to the upper room, why do you think they chose to pray?

- What do you imagine Jesus was thinking or feeling just before he left the apostles?
- The apostles were waiting for the Holy Spirit to come to them. Why was it important for them to receive the Spirit?

In his prayer to God, Jesus asks for two things. He first asks that he soon return to God. Secondly, Jesus asks that God strengthen and protect the disciples who are now entrusted to carry on the mission begun by Jesus.

Read John 17:1-11

Allow for silence

- What does Jesus tell us about eternal life?
- What does Jesus ask God to do for the disciples?
- Why is it important that the disciples be united as one?

Scripture background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the Catechist Background section.

Just before Jesus ascends to the Father, he tells the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit to come to them. The disciples, including Jesus' mother, some other women, and the remaining eleven apostles, return to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, they go to the same room where they shared the Last Supper and wait for the Spirit. While they wait, they join together in prayer.

Going back to the time just following the Last Supper, today's Gospel shows us Jesus praying for the disciples. Jesus knew his work on earth was finished and that it would now be the responsibility of the apostles to carry on the mission. Jesus asks God first that he might return to God in full glory. He then asks God to strengthen and care for the disciples. In a special way, Jesus asks that the apostles be one with another in the same way that Jesus and God are one. As the disciples carry on the mission begun by Jesus, they too will one day be glorified by God.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

- When you're uncertain about the future, who are the people you turn to for help? How does your faith in God help you in these situations?
- How does being united with others helped you when you face problems?
- What is one thing that makes unity difficult for you? Is there something about yourself or others that causes the problem? What can you do to overcome the obstacle?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the Gospel in Life.]

Doctrinal Discussion Starters

Christian Unity

Held in 381 A.D., the Council of Constantinople identified four chief characteristics of the Catholic Church. These characteristics are named in the Nicene Creed established at that Council and they include unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. In particular, today's Gospel points to the characteristic of unity. The source of our unity comes from the one God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christ binds us together in the family of God. In our humanness, we sometimes fail to remember that we are one body. We separate ourselves from other members of the body through our own sinfulness. Like those gathered in the upper room awaiting the Holy Spirit, we find strength in praying with one another. Our prayer focuses on the common goal of being faithful to Jesus and the mission he began here on earth. With the help of one another, we have the strength and courage to continue sharing the Good News of Jesus.

- How does your unity with other people show you are part of Christ's body?
- What glory awaits you as a believer of Jesus and someone who carries out the mission he began?
- What are some divisions in the Body of Christ that you have noticed? What suggestions do you have for healing these differences?

Sacrament Connection

At our Baptism, we are welcomed into the family of God. We become part of Christ's body and receive the Holy Spirit. It is with the help of the Spirit that we have strength, courage, and wisdom to lead others to Christ. Baptism opens the way for us to participate in other sacraments that help unify us as one, particularly Eucharist in which all gather around the one table of the Lord.

The Gospel in Life

Do you see an area of separation among people, perhaps in your family, at school, in your parish? What steps can you take to restore unity? You may decide on an action or ask someone who shares your concern to pray with you for healing.

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Junior High, Church History, chapters 2 and 9

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