

7th Sunday of Easter

Today's readings speak about the love and unity among Christians is the first and foremost important witness for believers to bear. The core of Jesus' message is love, a love that is to be manifested not only in nice-sounding words but, more convincingly, in the genuine acts of love that will bind his disciples together into one community. The world cannot be evangelized by competing Churches that is why; Jesus prayed that his disciples might be as fully one as he and the Father are one. Jesus prayed for the victory, unity, protection and consecration of his disciples.

(i) Jesus prayed that his disciples might find victory by living out their Christianity in the rough and tumble of life, instead of spending full time in prayer and meditation in convents and monasteries or in a life withdrawn from the world. Of course, there is a need for prayer, meditation and quiet times for this equipping process. The disciples must win the world for Christ by living out their Christianity within the world. They must bear witness to Christ through their transparent Christian lives, reflecting Christ's love, mercy, forgiveness and spirit of humble service.

(ii) *Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples:* The world cannot be evangelized by competing Churches. That is why Jesus prayed that his disciples might be as fully one as he and the Father are one. But Christian unity is not determined by whether we agree with each other about every interpretation of Scripture or doctrine or form of Church government. Rather, Christian unity is determined by whether and how well we love one another, and whether we reflect the love of God in Christ for the world.

(iii) Jesus prayed for His Father's protection for his disciples from the attacks of the Evil One. If the Disciples of Christ fall, it is because they try to meet life on their own strength and do not remember the presence of their protecting God and seek His help.

(iv) Jesus prayed that his disciples might be consecrated by the truth. (a) ‘Consecrate’ means to set apart for a special task (Jer 1:5; Ex 28:41). (b) It also means to equip a man with the qualities of mind, heart and character which are necessary for that task. God has chosen us and dedicated us for His special service of loving and obeying Him and bringing others to do the same. He has not left us to carry out that great task with our own strength, but by his grace, He fits us for our task, if we place our lives in His hands.

We need to understand, appreciate, cooperate and pray: The denominations are a reality. There is no use of blaming each other for the historical events which caused these divisions in Christ’s Body. What we can do is to learn sympathetically about the doctrinal similarities and differences to our own beliefs among Christian believers, to shed prejudices and suspicion about each other, and to learn to love each person whom we encounter and to cooperate with the members of all denominations in all possible ways.

We need to go beyond friendship and cooperation: The unity for which we pray is not merely a “comfortable” notion of friendliness and cooperation. It requires also our willingness to dispense with competition between us. We need to open ourselves to each other, to offer gifts and receive gifts from one another, so that we may truly enter into our shared new life in Christ, which is the only true victory.

We need to pray earnestly in our own denominations and in interdenominational prayer gatherings that God may show us the right way, to proceed in achieving true and lasting Christian unity, without sacrificing the basic Christian principles and teachings. We should offer also our personal prayers that the unity for which Our Lord prayed may be brought soon.