

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Jesus concludes the Last Supper with a long prayer. In that prayer, he prays for us. He asks God for what he judges best for us, for those who hear his word, and his message about the truth of their life. And what is that word? Put simply, they are loved by God. We cannot see God, but we can know God's attitude toward us, *all of us!*

Some complain that to reduce the Christian faith to the reality of love is a diminishment of the message of Jesus and the life that Jesus wants of us. They see it as a "watering down" of the Gospel. For instance, they complain that catechesis must not simply be "love each other." There is some truth to their complaints, but not over the fact that the foundation of the Christian message is about love. This is especially when we listen carefully to the words of Jesus. Love is at the heart of his message. Of course, love covers a multitude of other matters. Love entails responsibility, a favorite theme of the late Pope John Paul II. Love involves unity. Saint Augustine is known for his teaching: Love and do what you want. While this can be misunderstood, this summary was intended as being quite demanding. Acting out of love in difficult circumstances can be the hardest thing we ever do.

A Gospel Word for the Home

John 17:20-26

Today's Gospel is about oneness, being connected and being a part of each other. For American's the call to oneness is particularly challenging. We are raised on a steady diet of individualism right from the womb. There are some exceptions to this and blessed are those for whom "do it alone" is not the first commandment. Jesus wants to connect us to each other, to himself and to God. Once we are connected, our connection is like being connected to an electrical current, we can light up the world. And just like an electrical system, if we disconnect, nothing can happen. So the clue to understanding this very dense part of the Gospel is to think of the flow of life and energy. There is also a message here of trusting in God's power to do what God intends us to do. We don't have to do anything "all by ourselves." One of the best settings for such cooperation and connectedness is family life. Some say that families are disintegrating in our contemporary world. Surely some are, but there's also a kind of revolution going on where many families are more united than ever. They connect with each other both in old-fashioned ways like working and playing together or by the new means of communication. That is the message of today's Gospel: that we all be *one*.

There are many applications of Jesus' prayer for oneness. Its achievement is a gradual one to be sure. So it's useful to think of this as something that's achieved one small move at a time. In family life, greater unity comes through talking more with each other, listening more carefully, and responding more honestly. We all can grow in this. Our neighborhoods can become more united by getting to know one's neighbors and looking for opportunities to help each other. The same can be said of our parishes. Parish unity comes about one gesture at a time. We are called together to worship God not as a bunch of individuals but as a community. How do we show that? Look for opportunity to create greater oneness in family and parish life.

Parent Survival

Let's return to that notion of trying to do something all by oneself. Such attempts may be one of the worst occupational flaws of parents. And it happens most to parents who are very conscientious. They want to do it all. And eventually they become tired, worn-out and even depressed.

One of the greatest challenges facing parents is to know when to ask for help. Certainly, seeking assistance can become a part of parental prayer. Where there are two parents, let them work as a team. But also know that effective parents seek the help of their children. In days of old, parents routinely taught children to cook, sew, fix what was broken, and yes, clean up after themselves. In working together, family oneness is enhanced.

Car or Meal Talk

Ask your children for their ideas on how to make your family more of a team than a bunch of individual players.

One-Line Prayer

Triune God, help us to be more closely connected with each other like you are to us. Amen.