

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson

29th May 2022 - 7th Sunday of Easter

Readings (Year C): 1st: Acts 7:55-60. Psalm: 96. 2nd: Apocalypse 22:12-14. 16-17. 20.

Gospel: John 17:20-26.

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said Holy Father, I pray.

On this 7th Sunday of Easter, over the 3 year cycle we hear all of the prayer in 3 sections. This year it is the last section. What makes this prayer of Jesus unique, apart from the fact that he is praying for us, is that he is directly addressing his heavenly Father. We are, so to speak, eaves dropping on a conversation taking place in eternity, talking of things that God knew and loved “before the foundation of the world.” Jesus is praying not only for his immediate disciples but for all those who come to believe through their witness. **That means us.**

It means all of those who have come to believe, and all of those who will come to believe through the witness of the apostolic succession. We are part of that continuum of people stretching back through time to the apostles and first disciples and Jesus is praying that we are given a share of the glory he had before the world was even made. Jesus prays **that** because he loves us, because God has loved us from all eternity.

Prayer is fundamental to any faith, and how often we all pour out our hearts in prayer, sometimes wondering if anyone is listening; asking what is going on: yet in faith and trust we hand it over to the Lord. The classical definition of prayer is the elevation of the mind, heart and soul to God. Prayer is the threshold between earth and heaven. Our feet are still entrenched in this world but at the threshold of prayer we knock on the door of heaven.

The faithless mind, having no contact with heaven, would judge that the programme of Jesus was crashing about him and that all was falling apart. But in prayer raising his eyes to heaven, Jesus is returning to the centre where in fact all is one. There is a serene unity between Father and Son beneath the storms on the surface of life. The divine perspective of Jesus transcends the small minded plotting of enemies. Nothing, not even betrayal and death, can break the inner core of unity. Jesus prays that his disciples too will share in this inner centre of knowledge and love.

Prayer is the fruit of our awareness of God’s involvement in all that is happening in life. Jesus’ prayer is not self-centred but he rejoices that the glory of the Father will be reflected in his own glorification and that would be extended to all those that you have given to me, namely his disciples, **and us too.**

The prayer in this instance is for those who have accepted his message. While Jesus is going to the Father the disciples would still remain in the world with all its trials and tribulations. We, the disciples of Christ today, remain in the world.

When we experience failure or fear, when everything is crashing down around us, then it is time to raise our minds and connect with the Lord. In these days of so much pressure and depression, of stress and isolation, we need time and make time to be with the Lord. All too easily we let ourselves be submerged by the noise and pace of life. We need that inner stillness where we are aware of the divine presence.

“If you want to spend your life alternating between anxiety and depression simply let the bad news set up squatter’s rights in your mind. In the basement of bad news there is little light and no hope.”

Like Jesus at the hour of climax we must go to the Upper Room and stay at the threshold of God in prayer. Prayer brings increasing awareness of a relationship with God. It expands our space and extends our vision of life. It grows in the intimacy of knowing God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. It wells up from silent depths to eloquence in praise and petition, in thanksgiving and contrition.

Lift up your hearts: we lift them up to the Lord