

## ***SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER***

***John 17:1-11***

In our Gospel reading today, from the seventeenth chapter of John, Jesus is praying. Some call this chapter the real Lord's Prayer. The prayer we usually call the Lord's Prayer is actually Jesus' sample prayer for the disciples, so it is really the disciple's prayer. But here, the Lord is the one doing the praying. Another way to look at it is, the Lord's Prayer is Jesus' teaching on prayer, but here we have his example.

On top of that, Jesus is openly praying it before His disciples.

True, He is not talking to them, He is talking to the Father. But He is obviously aware that the disciples are listening, and He wants them to hear, He wants them to know for their own peace of mind, but also as an example. So, let us listen to the Lord praying today for our peace of mind, and so that we can learn from His example.

First of all, it is significant that Jesus is praying. Some people look at this and say, "What? Is God talking to Himself?" Jesus had said, "The Father and I are one". Is Jesus talking to Himself when He prayed? Without getting into the depths of the mystery of the Trinity or the Incarnation, these questions need to be explored.

It bears to be explored, and commented upon, in order to highlight the point that Jesus chose to pray. Jesus was headed toward betrayal, arrest, abandonment, and the cross. In the midst of that trial He chose to pray. In His hour of need, the

Almighty, that is, God in the flesh, chose to pray.

Some Christians, especially Anglicans, don't think they need to pray. We justify not needing to pray by saying something like, "Oh, God already knows what I need, what I think and what I feel. I don't need to tell HIM". It's the same as saying "my spouse already knows I love him/her, so I guess I don't need to tell him/her on a regular basis". Our spouse knows we love them, but they still want to hear it from us on a regular basis. In the same way, the Father already knew what Jesus was going through, but Jesus felt the need to pray. If Jesus needed to pray, then we certainly need to pray!

The second thing we learn, is the proper attitude of prayer.

Jesus' sample pray for his disciple begins, "Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed (that is Holy) be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done." In the same vein, Jesus begins His prayer in today's Gospel with these words: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify You". Jesus' first thought is God. We know some people seem to always talk about themselves, while others always seem to focus on what others are thinking or feeling. Jesus' first thought is God, God's will and God being glorified. He is praying for Himself, but that He would be faithful, so that Father's will is done. Too many Christians think first of themselves: what do I need; what do I want?

Our attitude in prayer should be God centered, not self centered. Jesus is about to go through the worst ordeal a person could endure, yet He focuses on God and God's will. Yes, we should pray in the face of trials, but our praying should be done in an attitude of humility.

The third thing we learn, is the meaning of Eternal Life. Jesus says, "this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true

God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent". Eternal life is not something that is won and achieved or bought, it is a relationship. So we should seek to know God. That means talking to God. It also means listening. If we want eternal, abundant life, then seek a relationship with God first. Then everything else will fall into place.

The fourth thing we learn, is that Jesus prayed for us. Jesus prayed, "I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given me, for they are Yours". Jesus is praying for His disciples. They are about to go through a trial themselves. They will experience pain and terror, anxiety and anguish, loss, guilt and shame. So Jesus prays that God will take care of them.

But He was not just praying for the handful of people two thousand years ago, He was praying for us too. He was praying that God would take care of us in the midst of our trials, when we are experiencing pain and terror, anxiety and anguish, loss, guilt and shame.

Finally, Jesus, knowing there would be divisions in the church, prayed for unity. Since the beginning of the Christian church, Christians manage to divide themselves on every level. We organize ourselves into factions and use labels like Liberal or Conservative, Evangelical or Charismatic. We divide ourselves into denominations: Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox. Even within congregations we make divisions between the young and the old, between people who like different styles of ministry and different programs, between those who voted yes, and those who voted no on a particular issue.

But, Jesus doesn't want us all to think and act alike. He made us different so that we could fulfill different purposes. A team has different groups. For example, in hockey you have defence and

forwards, penalty killers, power play experts and coaches, but they are still part of the same team. We Christians may be different as individuals, but that doesn't mean we should be divided.

The fact is, Jesus prayed. The Gospels are always talking about Jesus going away to pray. In our Gospel today, we have an example of how He prayed, an example He intended for us to study.

From this small part of it, we learn that Jesus felt the need to pray, that He prayed in humble focus on God. We learn that Eternal life comes in knowing God, that Jesus prayed for us, and that we should be united in Christ.

Jesus prayed, so let us pray with Him! But, always remember that Jesus prayed for us, and the Bible tells us that Jesus continues to intercede with the Father on our behalf. Take time each and every day to maintain a relationship with the Father through prayer, just as Jesus did.

**AMEN.**