

Acts 1:6-14
Psalm 68:1-10, 33-36
1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11
JOHN 17:1-11

Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. John: 1:11

Jesus is praying for those who are with him at the end – the men and women in his close circle. Scripture often illustrates Jesus praying or going off to pray. He is our model for the importance of prayer in our lives, quite time, and separation of the day-to-day. This coming Friday afternoon, I will join a group of women doing exactly that. We are going to pray, be quiet, and be separate for about 24 hours. Almost daily, my e-mail contains requests for prayer, reports on the condition of someone on our prayer list, and thanksgivings. There are many people in this parish that realize the importance of prayer in their lives and for others. We are blessed even with miracles like the improvement of William's sister-in-law. And each service is followed with the opportunity for individual prayer and anointing: people come forward, share their concerns and requests, some kneel, some can't, and we pray, lifting their concerns to God just as Jesus lifted his in this verse.

In reading this gospel over and over, it was very paternal for me, very caring as a parent for their children or as the caring for those we love, parent or not. Jesus loved those around him, as he loves us. We are brought into this scripture, because Jesus opens his prayer to include **all** that God has given him. Last week, we had two baptisms and at that time they were marked as Jesus' own. Each of us was marked as Jesus' own when we were baptized, therefore we are part of Jesus' prayer.

The gospel started with Jesus looking up and saying, *Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you.* Our gospel today occurs in John before the Passion, before the betrayal and arrest, before the trials and sentence to death, before the death and burial, and before the resurrection. Jesus' prayer is before all of that; even though our church lectionary uses it today. This is a very different prayer than the ones in the garden the night of his betrayal. In this scripture, Jesus was praying for himself and his disciples.

Did you know that May 1 was Ascension Day? Our first reading today from Acts 1, says ...*as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.* He ascended. In our church year, Easter is ending and we await Pentecost – the coming of the Holy Spirit next Sunday.

My e-mail also contains an almost daily writing from Barbara Crafton, a noted Episcopal priest, author, spiritual director, and New Jersey resident. The Friday ones focus on the lessons for Sunday and she spoke about the Holy Spirit; "as we ponder Jesus' leaving of the world and hang suspended, awaiting the spirit's coming." She goes

on to say, “The Spirit is needed, for Jesus to become the Way for us” and that “without the Spirit working in us to receive him, he’s just another first-century person.”

The Holy Spirit’s actions in my life are very important to me. Several of us were talking about that last week and I have written about views. You see, I consider the Holy Spirit to be the action verb of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is what moves in our lives. What makes each of us the Christians we are. What makes us do certain things: like getting up and coming here – that’s action, like helping someone – that’s action, like talking to someone about our faith – that’s action, like lifting up prayer – that’s action.

Did you ever think about it that way? Maybe not! You see, I ask the Holy Spirit to come into my day, my writing, my work, my sermons, my actions. I may light a candle or candles and say, “Come Holy Spirit, fall afresh on me.”

Anything I do you can do in your own way. Jesus showed us all the Way. And we are all here following him. Amen.

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