

Homily for Seventh Sunday of Easter

There is power in unity or if you like in oneness. Being together in a family, group or community as one is not really a very easy activity because that would involve the collapsing of individualities to have one strong entity. Jesus knew that the community of disciples he was leaving behind would face the challenge of remaining one as he designed. It was based on this foreknowledge that he took some time to pray intensively for unity: "That they may be one". This oneness should not be a social oneness where people are brought together either by liquor, football fan-hood or similar things. It should not be a kind of oneness that is political, where people are brought together by an ideology or agenda. It should not be a geographical or racial oneness where people from the same area or location become one. It should not even be mere religious oneness where people are united by a common creed. It should rather be a spiritual oneness that goes beyond the social, political, racial, geographical, religious and so on. This oneness is expected to start from our various families. This oneness is needed in our various communities, States, and Nations. Jesus prays for unity. Jesus' prayer flows from his loving mind. A loving mind is a prayerful mind. Jesus is in a loving relationship with his Father and his disciples. To live with this relationship is lovingly a prayer. Then we become prayerful, then we never pray, but every moment prayer goes out of us. It becomes the perfume of our life, of our love. Without love, oneness and unity will be a temporary agreement. There is the need for us to let love lead us. When we do this, the oneness and unity that our Lord prayed about will become a reality and our lives as individuals and groups will be transformed.

When we think of ourselves, most of us work for unity in our own ways and fail to share the same ideas and principles and the same goal. Although the members of the group may have different gifts and talents, they come from different backgrounds, it does not matter as long as there is a common goal and unity. Unity brings strength to a group. As Catholic/Christians we are called to give corporate witness to Christ by our unity of belief, worship and prayer. The Body cannot be divided if it is going to give true witness to Christ. In the 1st Reading, Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, dies for his belief in the truth and his unity to Christ. There have been hundreds of martyrs in the history of the Church that gave their lives for the truth of faith and for unity in the Church. Their witness worked to build up the Body of Christ - the Church - and gave strength and courage to others who saw their unwavering unity in Christ and His Church. Today, even more so, our witness to unity is essential. When we are united with others we are made stronger and given more courage because of the support of the others in the group or community. And as the second reading suggests that we will be judged on account of our deeds, how much we work for unity, how much love we endure for unity. Only charity can make us one, only charity can bring us to perfection, only charity can take away any egoism from us. Eucharist is the greatest expression of God's charity. It is Christ's body and blood that make us one. St. Augustine says that the Eucharist is our sign of unity and bond of our fraternity. Yet we are invited to spend some time today thinking about how different our world would be if we really recognized that we are one!