

John 17:1-11 (12-13)  
Seventh Sunday of Easter, Year A  
May 23, 2026

*A prayer for oneness.*

So that they may be one.

I speak to you this morning in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Good morning.

So that they may be one. Jesus' last prayer.

This morning, we find ourselves on the seventh Sunday of Easter. We are moving quickly towards the end of the Easter season, and soon, Pentecost will be upon us. The Pascal candle will be extinguished, the Pentecostal flame will burn, deacons will stop saying alleluia, alleluia at the end of the dismissal and we will move into what is commonly known as ordinary time. And it won't be very ordinary. Trust me, a lot happens during ordinary time.

Before Easter season comes to an end, I want to take us back to Holy week. Now why would I want us to go back to Holy week? We've all been there, right?

We walk triumphant arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Maundy Thursday where we find ourselves in the upper room. Jesus, as priest, breaks bread with us and gives us a new covenant. He leaves the table. Jesus, as Deacon, humbles himself as servant and washes our feet and gives us a new commandment, to love one another as he has loved us. Then the garden, the betrayal, the condemnation, the death, his burial and then his glorious resurrection.

So, what's missing?

Very little, if anything, is said about Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday of Holy Week. A friend of mine brought this to my attention with focus on Wednesday.

In the traditions of the church calendar, Wednesday in Holy Week, is often known as "Silent Wednesday." It's called silent because in reconstructing the events of Jesus' final week before his crucifixion there doesn't seem to be any activity on Wednesday. The Gospel writers are essentially mute on any activity of Jesus' Wednesday before the cross.

There are some suggestions that Jesus continued teaching at the temple and that the religious leadership was gathered to plot against Jesus once and for all. But in the calendar of activity, we're left with a gaping hole. What did Jesus say on this day? Who did he heal? Who did he confront? How did he act? What are we missing from this Wednesday?

It would be largely presumptuous of me to suggest I know what was going on that day, or why God intended it to be relatively quiet in the pages of Scripture. However, the apparent mystery of this day is helpful to us in considering how to walk with Jesus. It's a day of silence, a day where you and I don't get to look at what was happening as we do on those other days of Holy Week. We're left, so to speak, in the dark on Jesus' actions.

Again, It would be largely presumptuous of me to suggest I know what was going on that day. But I will.

On this day, I believe, Jesus is immersed in prayer. He looks up to heaven and prays the words we just heard in the first 11 verses of John's Gospel. I point to the first 11 verses, but all 26 verses of Chapter 17 are this prayer by Jesus. John 17 consists entirely of Jesus' last prayer. The last of his final discourse. A long prayer Jesus says aloud before his arrest.

This prayer has three parts: We hear only the first two parts in today's reading, but I will take you to what I believe is the most important. Three parts.

First: Jesus prays for himself. Jesus states that his work on earth is finished and asks God to glorify him. In this context, glorify signifies that it is time for Jesus to be betrayed, arrested, condemned, killed, resurrected, and ascend to heaven. But Jesus says clearly that he has accomplished what God intended him to do. Listen to what Jesus says. *"They were yours and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you gave me is from you. For the words you gave me I have given to them. And they have received them and know in truth that I came from you, and they believe that you sent me"*. To me, this sounds a bit like our affirmation in the context of the Nicene Creed.

Secondly: he prays for his disciples. Jesus is concerned that they are still in the world even though Jesus is leaving. He will no longer be here to protect them. Continuing in John 17, verses 12 and 13, Jesus says this: *"while I was with them, I protected them in your name, I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost. I speak about these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves."* Jesus prays that they will have the joy he himself knows, to help them through the hardships that the world will inflict. He sends them into the world, just as he was sent into the world, to live as humans, to pass salvation on to others, to spread the word of God.

And the third part; Jesus prays for all of us. This final prayer, although not Jesus' very last words, is a prayer specifically for those who had not yet heard his word. It is not a command or a new covenant to live by. It is a prayer. A prayer for you and for me.

It is a prayer for community. Jesus prays that, *"we all may be one."* To be a follower of Jesus is to be a part of a greater whole. According to Jesus there are to be no solitary Christians.

Within this community, the prayer is for unity, *"that we all may be one."* Does that mean we all have to get along all the time?

Does that mean we all have to agree on issues of the Christian Church all the time? If one thinks of this as a functional/political statement, it will seem to call for constant agreement and accord. But if one thinks more in ontological terms, then it becomes who we are. We are one in Jesus the Christ whether we agree with each other or not.

Jesus' prayer reminds us that our unity, our "oneness" is to be a sign to the world of God's love for us in Jesus. Oneness and unity are about love. And if you have been a part of a family, a member of a church, or a community, you know that within that love there can be disagreements. We are human. But the mystery of the incarnation is that God desired unity with us so much that God became one of us. And in that moment, we were drawn into the oneness of God, the Creator/Father/Mother, the Son, and the Spirit. It is with God's help that we can live into that oneness.

The disciples were in the time between the Ascension and the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. We are in that same time but also between the first and second coming of Jesus. May we rejoice in the assurance that Christ is with us, continuing to pray for our oneness, our unity.

Jesus prayed for us. He prayed *that we may be one*.

One Baptism, One Spirit, One Lord, One God, One Mission, One Church, One Body. One!

Amen

Archdeacon Michael Kitt