

“...that they may be one, as we are one.”

John 17:11b

(Rev David Mayhew - St Barbara's, Earlsdon Sunday after Ascension Day)

Let's pray

The Diocesan Prayer

Father, pour out your Spirit upon us and grant us
*a new vision of your glory,
a new experience of your power
a new faithfulness to your word and
a new consecration to your service,
that your love may grow among us and your kingdom come:
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

The last sentence from our gospel reading today:

***Holy Father, protect them in your name
that you have given me,
so that they may be one, as we are one***

There is no Lord's Prayer in John's Gospel but there is this remarkable, long, passionate prayer of our Lord Jesus. Our reading today has just half of it. Jesus prays for himself, for his apostles and for all who will believe their message (v.20). So that includes us! What does he pray for us?

“that they may all be one. As you Father are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us...” (v.24)

So he prays for one-ness with each other and one-ness with God... so close that we are *in* God and God in us.so that, as Jesus says later in his prayer ***“they may have my joy made complete in themselves” (v.13)***

So how far has his prayer been answered in your life? Where have you experienced unity? Take a little time to remember your experiences of unity.

1. Our experience of unity can be surprising

- A friend mentioned experiencing community in L'Arche - people of very different abilities united in mutual care.
- I remembered Paddy Cosgrove, my Labour opponent in the 1983 General Election. We mercilessly attacked each other's policies but became good friends as a result.
- I notice the growing unity amongst my neighbours; and the life-giving responses to the current crisis in our hospitals, care homes and community, not least through Hope Coventry and our Good Neighbours project
- Have you seen the Blessing videos in the UK, Coventry and around the world? Have you signed up to Open Heaven: the church in Coventry united in prayer for our city, street by street?
- You will have many other experiences of the way in which Jesus' prayer is being answered... in sometimes surprising ways...

Unity is not the same as uniformity: sometimes the greatest unity comes as we build relationships in the midst of difference and difficulty.

Unity is very different people living in harmony

Unity is disagreement leading to deeper relationship

Unity is difficulty leading to a greater dependence on God and on one another... growing together as we tackle challenges,

Unity is not fixed but dynamic.... an evolving process... **and**

Unity can be fragile: Govt/Opposition/UK/EU/UN/Marriage... it needs constant protection and restoration, in every relationship

2. Jesus' goal of one-ness

In the light of our experience of unity, what do you notice about Jesus' prayer **that they may be one..?**

a. He does not use the word unity, with its structural, organisational and political overtones. His prayer is **that they may be one**: it is **personal and intimate**. He does not pray for wealth or health or even the absence of conflict and challenge. He prays **that they may be one**, as He and the Father are one. There is no perfect system but there is perfect one-ness that we are all called to be part of.

b. His prayer is **protective: Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me,...** Later in the prayer he prays "protect them from the evil one". (v.15) Protect them from division, deceit and despair: all that threatens one-ness.

c. His prayer is **purposeful...that they may be one, as we are one**. He is the only One in whom all things are made whole. His purpose is that we share fully in his love and truth

3. How? How do we become one as Jesus prayed

- **Look back**, know protection **in your name that you have given me**, in Christ his names are yours: Annunciation: Jesus, Saviour; Baptism: Son, Messiah; Cross: Lamb of God. Pray the names over you and yours.

- **Look up** as Jesus does here, offer all your work to the Father and pray for his kingdom to come, his glory to be seen in all that you are and do.

- **Look round** at the people you have been given and pray for protection and blessing... that they may grow in one-ness with each other and with God... whatever they face.

- **Look forward** Jesus is risen from the dead, is our ascended King, the greatest power in heaven and earth. He has promised to return, to usher in a new heaven and a new earth where all is harmony and peace. Hold on to this hope.

Your kingdom come, Lord, as you taught us to pray...

More of your peace and power in our work, more glory,

More fullness of life for our families and friends.

More of your eternal hope and harmony

whatever we face,

Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever.... Amen