

**The Seventh Sunday of Easter**  
**The Rev. Christy Dorn**

5-20-07

*Acts 16:16-34*

*Psalm 97*

*Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21*

*John 17: 20-26*

Oneness

Today the Church gives us the magnificent high priestly prayer of Jesus. By the time this prayer had been included in John's Gospel, the Christians were no longer one. The Christian community was embroiled in its own divisions. This is a prayer for unity and love. It takes us back to the Last Supper. Jesus is at the table with the twelve. At the moment Judas leaves, he starts to speak about glory and loving one another, and oneness. Jesus pleads with the Father that the extraordinary sense of love that binds the Father to the Son will bind us to one another. He is praying for the Church.

Does it really make a difference if we are all one? And if it does make a difference, how do we work for that sense of "oneness," that sense of "connectedness" within our own church? There are lots of things we want in this world, so many things we'd love to have, but I'm convinced that when we look into our heart of hearts, and tell ourselves the truth, there's really only one thing we long for, and that is communion—being deeply at peace and at "one" with others. I think that's what we're made for. Unity is not conformity; it's something much deeper. As theologian William Loader says, "Unity is not an extra; it's the essence of what it means to be Christian."

In a few days I will celebrate the anniversary of my baptism. As I've shared with you before, I'm one of those few who actually remembers my baptism, as I was already an adult when I made the decision to come back to the church and be baptized. I vividly remember those first few Sundays I attended my church, St. Mary's as an unchurched young adult. I wasn't really sure what the church was supposed to be about. I just knew that I was drawn to it. And, as I have shared with you also, it became clear to me that I was experiencing and what kept bringing me back Sunday after Sunday was community. And the other amazing thing that I noticed each Sunday that I returned was that those same people kept coming back as well! You see, up until then, my experience of church had been only Christmas and Easter. It came as a surprise to me that people actually came *every* Sunday.

But the really important learnings I came away with during those early days as a "seeker" and as a fledgling Christian, were that: people come to church because there's something there that speaks to them; and that God is at work in our lives. I also learned that you don't have to like all the people you are called to love.

As an unchurched person, my experience of community told me who God was. Through my experience of community, the Resurrection of Jesus became real. Maybe some of you have had similar experiences.

We do these and many other things **together** because Jesus invites us to live life **together**—unlike the ways of the world. It's an invitation which gives life. We cannot live out the Good News in isolation.

Today's Gospel is a prayer. The prayer of Jesus is a prayer for unity and love. It's love based on the realization that we belong to one another as children of the same God; it's love that transcends credentials and labels, fears and biases. Through such love, the Resurrection of Jesus becomes real to us in our own time and place.

I came across a meditation in a recent *Forward Day by Day*, part of which I'd like to share with you. Paraphrased, it goes like this:

We seek to know God; our search won't be completed today,  
But we will move a step closer to God.  
Do one thing today: hold up a mirror. Jesus is concerned  
What the world will see in us.  
It's his desire that the world learn about him by observing us.  
If half the people around us are unchurched, what could they  
See in us to change their minds?  
If 2/3 of our fellow parishioners stay home on Sunday, could  
Anything they see in us change their minds?  
If Cain and Abel are waging their endless war, would seeing us  
Softened their hearts?

(end of paraphrase)

One of the reasons why we share Scripture on Sunday morning is to “enflesh” it—to see how it speaks to our lives today. How has the Church, the Christian community, brought you to choose God's ways? What things in our life together model unity—or lack of unity?

May we invite one another into our lives and may we work together for the good of the Gospel. The Church is the people of God; we are the Church believing in Christ together. And God is at work in us. Amen. Alleluia.