St. Paul prays “that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.” This theme of unity runs through the First Letter to the Corinthians, and remains so important that in every single Mass we have a prayer for the “peace and unity” of the Church according to God’s will.

How can we achieve this UNITY? How can we come together?

If we think about this in non-metaphorical terms, this question is easy: If I want to be united with, to come together with my friends, I simply say, “Let’s meet somewhere in Pittsford Plaza for lunch,” and voilà, we have all come together, we have achieved that unity!

The path to unity is not so different when we are talking about coming together into a unity of mind and heart: If we are all heading to the same place, eventually we will be united.

Whither, then; to where can we all head, in our thoughts and in our souls, in order to eventually be united? To JESUS! To the Cross!

We draw closer together to one another when we each draw closer to God. How, then, do we reach Jesus? We learn how to reach Him from the Gospel:
From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"

To reach Jesus, we must REPENT.

A common word for “repent” in Latin is convertere, to face the correct direction. If we want to reach Jesus we must first make sure we’re heading in the right direction.

Recently I was driving home from a home somewhere up near Webster. I knew generally how to get back—just head south, turn right, and you’re in Pittsford—so I figured, I don’t need a GPS. (Famous last words!) So I began to head south on this road, and after driving for no little while I began to thank that, certainly I should have recognized one of the cross streets by now. Eventually I had no idea where I was until I saw a sign that read, “Welcome to Macedon”! Unbeknownst to me, this road that had started out heading south slowly curved, until eventually it led me somewhere totally other than where I wanted to be.

I think it’s the same in our spiritual lives, sometimes. We know where we want to get—to Jesus, to Heaven—and we start out heading in that direction, but slowly, subtly, without our realizing it, we get
off-track, and end up somewhere totally different. In moments like that we need to repent, to stop, look around, get our bearings, and re-orient our lives to that we’re once again heading where we want to go.

After we right ourselves so that we’re facing the correct direction, the second this we need to do to reach Jesus is to WALK towards God.

We know, generally, how to walk towards God: we need to “abound in good works,” as our Collect prayer said, to do the things that please God. But a lot of the time, this walk is like taking steps in the dark. Have you ever walked through a dark room where all the lights are off? Even if it’s a room in your home that you know well, you know where every piece of furniture is and you know that nothing’s in front of you, when you go to take that first step there’s something inside that says, “Woah! Be careful! Don’t go too far, too fast!” And so we take tiny, halting steps, feeling our way forward very carefully, barely lifting our feet of the ground.

Our walk to God can be like that. We know where we want to go, we know pretty much how to get there, but when we go to take that first step there’s something inside us that says, “Woah! Watch out! Don’t go too fast!” And so we take tiny baby-steps in our spiritual
life—we make progress, but only little, and very slowly. And so, in order to reach that unity with Jesus we desire, after making sure that we are facing in the correct direction and beginning to walk towards God, there is a third thing we must do: we must BELIEVE in God. This is something we profess in the Creed every Sunday: “I believe in one God…” But to believe in God—Credo in—is very different than simply to “believe that” there is a God, that somewhere out there someone or something made the universe. We read in the Letter of James in the New Testament that even the demons believe that there is a God—but for the Christian to believe in God means to TRUST in God. We must believe in Him, to be willing to follow Him, to trust the He is holding out a hand to use that we can grab on to, and so be led through the darkness to unity with him. If we have that trust in God, we will no longer make halting, slow progress in the spiritual life, but instead will run, leap, bound towards God, and so finally achieve that union with Him that we desire.

When thinking about progress in the spiritual life, there’s a prayer that I often have recourse to and often recommend to others; perhaps it’s already familiar to some of you. It’s the
thought I’ll leave you with today, a prayer written by Thomas Merton:

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think that I am following your will /
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you /
does, in fact, please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always,
though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."