SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 1:15-17,20a,20c-26; I Jn 4:11-16; Jn 17:11b-19

May 16-17, 2015

Something that becomes more a part of us, especially as we age, is a desire to know what is going on around us. It is why we have daily papers, history books, and personal journals. It is particularly why we have the Scriptures, which become a part of our communal effort to offer praise to Almighty God. The scriptures of these closing days of the Easter Season call us to look for the wider perspective to see what is happening to us in the story of our relationship with the God whose love is our life.

So far, the six weeks of the Easter Season have told us that the heart of our Eucharistic celebration is Jesus’ Resurrection - His victory over death and the consequences of that victory for each of us and for the world at large. Love has driven Jesus to endure sufferings, death and resurrection to bring us and our world to resurrection with Him.

In today’s gospel we have a flashback to what is known as Jesus’ Priestly Prayer: actually, the entire 17th chapter of John’s gospel. The setting of that prayer is, of course, the Last Supper on Holy Thursday evening; it marks that pivotal moment of transition when Jesus’ proclamation of the Good News becomes the life work of the apostles and ourselves.

Within hours of that moment, Jesus will be turned over to the authorities and accused of blasphemy; within less than twenty four hours, He will have died on the cross and been buried. The Priestly Prayer becomes the expression of His dream for us - His look into the future - into the life of His Church, into the lives of each of us. And what is His prayer? We just heard it in the gospel: “Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one.” The dream of Jesus, found within His Priestly Prayer, is that unity which profoundly affects your life and mine. It is basically the dream for all humanity.

Today’s headlines help to put all of this into startling, dramatic clarity. Jesus’ dream was and is still contradicted by violence, misunderstanding, indifference, mindless greed and a poverty of spirit. Without an awareness of Jesus’ dream, our world becomes confused, and all of life will seem pointless and terribly self-centered. Without a sharing in His dream, we all become victims of ideologies that bring us to madness.

Jesus’ dream is expressed in prayer for our lives as community on every level of human existence – from the family of faith that has brought us to this Mass to the family in which we live our daily life – from the family we know here at home to the one that includes Nepal, Syria, Baltimore and Philadelphia – the human family.
Does our awareness of everyday life as parish or family indicate that we have even begun to be aware of the drama of Jesus’ prayer? Do we have a sense of connectedness with the places the headlines bring into our life every day? Remember Jesus’ prayer as He continued: “I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one.” The unity for which He prays is precisely about our everyday lives, and that unity which gives to everyday life a value that is wonderful and empowering.

In our present day, when the life of the family is, not rarely, so little appreciated, Jesus’ prayer is surrounded with a drama that should catch the attention of the entire world. It shouldn’t take us too long to realize that somehow, particularly in our own day, the world is ignoring that historic and eternally relevant prayer of Jesus.

It takes the constant effort of each and all of us to bring the reality of Jesus’ dream for unity into the practical reality of its fulfillment in our daily lives. A faith based unity provides the standard of excellence for government at every level even to worldwide organizations that claim to represent all nations - even to humanity itself.

Against the backdrop of Jesus’ prayer, the words of St. John share the drama: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another.” It is that conscious effort to fulfill Jesus’ dream that can enable us to have an effect on our violence weary world. St. John continues: “Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit.” In that Spirit there is life and vigor that gives authority to our words and attractiveness to the example of our live.

Jesus dreams His dream and offers it to us in His gift of the Eucharist. It is a dream that carries a mandate for fulfilment. Jesus prays also for our going out into our world with Him and in His name as He prays: “As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth.”

What does the world see as we leave this Eucharist? Is our awareness of Jesus’ dream enough to let it come true on our streets and the streets of Baltimore, Philadelphia, Aleppo, or any other city that knows violence? Can we offer the reality of Jesus’ prayer to any and every person we meet? Our lives of love will prove it. Have we seen it? Have others?