

Homily based on the Gospel of John 17: 11-19

- In this Sunday's Gospel reading we have the privilege of listening to Jesus pray. We get a very intimate look at the depth of Jesus' love for us as He prays for us! In His prayer, Jesus asks God the Father for three things.
- When Jesus prays "*Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one.*" Jesus is asking God to keep His followers united. Keep us one in mind and heart. Keep us focused on one thing: Loving God and each other. Scripture scholars call this "unity of purpose". In plain language it means there are a lot of crazy things in this world that will try to draw us away from God and each other. Jesus prays that we stay focused and together as a community, as a Church.
- The second thing Jesus prays is that God the Father will protect us from the evil one. Jesus knows the devil exists and is a cruel and tricky enemy.
- Jesus knows there is a real battle for souls, a spiritual warfare in this world. Just listen to the news on any given day and you will see that battle being played out – good versus evil, hope versus despair.
- Jesus asks the Father to help us reject sin and selfishness and materialism. He asks the Father to help us avoid the traps of hatred and prejudice

and indifference that the devil sets in our paths. In a time where the world tells us “anything goes!” it can be difficult to see the traps. We need God’s protection.

- And the third petition in Jesus’ prayer for us is that God will make us strong disciples. Jesus prays that God’s great love for us will burn in our hearts like a fire. So much so that we will have the courage to go into the world and preach that love, be that love of God in a world that so desperately needs love. So Jesus prays to the Father: “Consecrate them in the truth”.
- What truth is Jesus talking about?
- The truth that love is the most wonderful gift you can give or receive. It is the most powerful weapon you can use against evil. It is the power to change the world, one heart at a time.
- And the truth that when we love we are connected to God in a unique and intimate way. As Saint John reminds us in the second reading today: *“God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.”*
- What three wonderful things Jesus asks for us in His prayer: That we remain together; that we are protected from evil; and that we bring God’s love into the world.
- There is another surprising thing about this Gospel reading. It is easy to think Jesus was saying this prayer on some lofty mountain top right before He ascended to heaven. But in fact, He made this prayer right before He was

arrested. He was about to face the most difficult time of His life. He knew what was ahead of Him, but He also knew what mattered – us!

- When Jesus prayed the words: *“I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth”* He was telling God the Father that He would make Himself holy by carrying out God’s will, God’s message of love, no matter what the consequences. So that we, His followers, could also be made holy by following His example and doing the same.
- And that is our job as followers of Jesus: Do as He did. Pick a spot and go for it! As Saint Therese remind us in her writings: Perform simple acts of love. Grow where you are planted.