

Homily based on the Gospel of John 17: 20-26

- Did you ever overhear a conversation, not like intentionally eavesdropping, but you were close by and couldn't help but hear. And part of what you heard was about you – in a positive way – and it made you feel really good. Maybe it was a family member, or one of your children or a co-worker talking. [9am Mass – or you hear your parent tell someone something nice about you]
- Every time I hear this Gospel, I feel that way, like I am hearing part of a private conversation. And in fact, today we are!
- In this Sunday's Gospel reading we have the privilege of listening to Jesus talk to His heavenly Father. We get a very intimate look at the depth of Jesus' love for us as He tells things to His Father about us and then prays for us.
- Here are some things He tells His Father in that conversation.
- Jesus tells His Father: "They are a gift to me". The "they" Jesus is referring to is each of us. We are a gift to Jesus – we usually think about it the other way around – Jesus is a gift to us.
- I remember as a child when I misbehaved and my mom would get angry with me I would remind her "I am a gift from God". And she'd snap back: I'm gonna ask God where the exchange window is!
- You know yourself, I know myself. We are not perfect. But yet Jesus sees us as a gift. How

awesome is that! It tells us that Jesus sees us as precious, important, our lives are valuable, we are lovable – despite our faults. Doesn't that feel good?

- And it makes you think – what if **we** saw each other as gifts – despite our flaws and differences. What a different world it would be – if we saw each other as gifts: precious, important, lovable. There would be no mass shootings of innocent children, no war, no violence, no need for weapons. We need to see each other as Jesus sees us – as gifts. (pause)
- Jesus also tells His Father: “I made known to them your name”. In other words: I told them all about you. And what **did** Jesus tell us about **His** Father? He told us God is **our Father** too. He told us we have a loving, powerful God who cast millions of stars into the sky, who creates worlds out of nothing – yet loves each one of us dearly, cares about us and is always close by. Jesus not only told us - Jesus showed us God's power through His healings and miracles. Jesus showed us God's love in His care for the poor, the sick, the outcast.
- As we **listen in** further to Jesus' conversation we hear Him pray for us.
- He prays that “They all may be 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.

- He prays this because 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.
- So, Jesus prays asking even more for us. He prays to His Father that: “The love with which you loved me, may be in them”. Jesus is asking that the tremendous love of God will be in our hearts and minds and souls. Why would He ask for that?
- Because Jesus knows love is the most wonderful gift you can give or receive. It is the glue that keeps us connected to each other and especially to God.
- It is the most powerful tool we have to bring patience, mercy, healing and forgiveness into the world. It is the single most powerful weapon we can use against evil. We need that love of God in us.

- And I think Jesus' third ask is the boldest and most love filled. Jesus prays: "I wish that where I am, they also may be with me." Jesus loves us so much he never wants to leave us. He wants to be with us here and now in our earthly life - God answered that prayer with the gift of Jesus' real presence in the Holy Eucharist. But while Jesus' wants **to remain with us** here and now He also wants **us to remain with him** where He is - beyond this life - God answered that part of the prayer too – with a promise to each of us – a promise of resurrection and the gift of eternal life in heaven.
- What love filled prayers Jesus makes for us.
- 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 most, He didn't pray for Himself – He prayed for us!
- That in itself is a lesson in how to face our own challenges, how to live with and through our own difficulties. Jesus teaches us to change the focus from ourselves to others – think of others, pray for others, serve others. In some remarkable way it makes our own burdens lighter.
- One last point about this conversation we listened in on. Jesus speaks to His Father about a

hope, an expectation He has. That others will come to believe in Him. We hear that expectation when Jesus says He prays for those who will **come to believe** in Him because of the word **we** spread.

- That means we have a job to do. Lead others to Jesus - by having the courage to go into the world so desperately in need of love and show others what Jesus' love looks like - by being that love, bringing that love to them.