

Homily Seventh Sunday of Easter

John 17: 1-11

- I have a question. When you were promoted and move up in grade school, did you forget everything you learned in the lower grades?
- When a new baby is born into a family, do the parents stop loving and caring for the other children? (Of course not, the house gets busier and noisier but the love is still there)
- When you change a job, do you lose all the skills and experiences you had from the hold job? (No, in fact those experiences often prepare you for the new job)
- One more, when you leave home to go away to college or when you get married do you forget about your family, stop loving them just because you're not physically living under the same roof? (Of course not)
- The point is we experience change and new things in life all the time. New experiences take the old and build on them. But the old things are not forgotten, not unimportant. Old and new experiences are all part of who we are.
- The time of Church year we are in reminds us of this. The time recalling the experience of the resurrection of Jesus, His ascension into heaven and the sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. We are reminded of God's constant love for his people, throughout time and we celebrate our new, deeper experience of God that is built upon all of the former experiences.
- In today's gospel we learn again about the depth of Jesus love for us and His desire for an ongoing relationship in a very new way. He continues to teach us valuable lessons by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- This morning we are given a unique privilege. Today's gospel lets us hear Jesus pray. We are allowed to listen to a very intimate prayer, between Jesus and His Father.
- In this prayer we hear Jesus tell His Father that He loves Him, trusts Him. Jesus says He knows soon He will leave this world to go be with the Father in heaven. Jesus realizes He will miss His followers, the friends left behind and He asks God to watch over them. That's the essence of the prayer of Jesus we hear in today's Gospel reading. What an intimate look at Jesus great love for His Father and for us!!!.
- When we look closely at some of the words Jesus speaks in this prayer, we realize they have a deeper meaning and some important messages for us today.
- When Jesus says, “**Now they know that everything you gave me is from you...**” He is reminding us everything we have is from God: our bodies, souls, talents, friends, family, jobs, homes –everything. When we realize this, we see things as Jesus saw them – precious gifts that we must give thanks for and must take care of.
- When Jesus prays the words “ **I revealed your name to those you gave me...**” He is telling us we have a responsibility to learn more and more about God and to teach others about God and His great love.
- When Jesus says” **I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work you gave me to do.**” He tells us God created us for a purpose. To bring His love and presence into the world. Each day there is something for us to do: go to school or work, take care of the home, care for the sick—and if we give that assignment our best effort (doesn't have to be perfect) we give praise and glory to God.

- But the message I would really like to focus on this morning is found in these words from Jesus to His Father: **“I pray for them”**. **(Stop and let those words sink in)**
- With these words Jesus teaches us we can talk to God and He listens. And Jesus message to us? **Pray for those God has given to us. Pray for those God has placed into your life.**
- Pray for those you love. Pray for their health, their safety, and their success. But what is the most important prayer you can pray for them? It’s right there in Jesus’ prayer.
- **That they come to know God.** Come to know how much God loves them. What a loving, patient, giving and forgiving Father He is. How precious and what great value they have in God’s eyes. How much God counts on them to bring His love and presence into the world. —Once they know that, everything else in life falls into place.
- Maybe you have a friend, family member, or child who doesn’t know this or doesn’t believe it. Don’t give up –keep praying for them – that they come to know God.
- Now here’s the hard part. If you look closely at this Gospel passage, if we read between the lines, there is an unspoken message about praying for those God has placed into our lives. Who were the people Jesus was praying for when He said, “ I pray for them”? His Mother? Those at the foot of His cross? The women who tended to Him, came to anoint His body? Of course He prayed for all those loyal and good to Him.
- But also in that group He prayed for were those who left Him in His hour of need- let Him down, hurt Him. Peter was part

of the “them” Jesus prayed for and Peter denied Jesus 3 times!!

- So what’s the unspoken message? Jesus reminds us we must pray for ALL those in our lives. Those easy to pray for and those not so easy to pray for.
- It’s kind of easy to pray for those you love, isn’t it? It’s much harder to pray for those who have hurt us. Like it or not we hold onto hurt.
- As I was preparing this part of the reflection, I suddenly remembered my very first girlfriend. Her name was Lisa and we were in the second grade together. It was that “puppy love thing”. We would pass notes to each other in class and we actually held hands once for about 3 seconds. Then I got sick and missed school for a week. When I got back to school Lisa was passing notes to someone else. I still get mad when I think of it---dumped in the second grade.... we hold onto hurt.
- Maybe you have been hurt by a friend, a relative, an ex-spouse. Maybe you’re hurt and angry with a parent who wasn’t there for you growing up. People you counted on but let you down. It is a safe bet that most of us have been let down or hurt by someone at some point in our life.
- Jesus reminds us we must pray for THEM too. Jesus shows us in His prayer we just heard that we must forgive and pray. He did that for Peter.
- When you stop to think about it why do some people do hurtful things to others? Sometimes it is out of fear, or anger or jealousy. Sometimes out of greed or indifference. But at the very core, the very root of it all—they behave in a hurtful way because they don’t truly know God. Don’t understand

how much God loves them. How precious each person is to God. How much God counts on them to bring His love and presence into the world. If they knew God they'd do everything they could to avoid hurting someone.

- Jesus shows us we need to forgive as He forgives. Jesus shows us that forgiveness and prayer are linked and cannot be separated. Prayer makes our forgiveness complete.
- Jesus teaches us in the unspoken part of His prayer to let go of the hurt, the anger, the grudges and to go even a step further--pray for those who hurt us, who let us down. But pray that most important prayer for them, the prayer Jesus prayed—"That they will come to know God"
- Can we do this on our own? No, this is hard stuff. But luckily we are not on our own. We have that much deeper experience of God's presence in us. We have the gift of the Holy Spirit. A spirit of holiness and strength dwelling in us to help us follow the examples of Jesus and live as followers of Jesus.
- Jean Vanier , in the book "Drawn to the Mystery of Jesus", assures us the gift of the Spirit is God's gift to each person. He writes: "*Holiness is not something we can achieve, it is given. It is not reserved for a few strong willed people, or for those who have an official role in the church or for those who preach and do theological studies. It is not reserved for well-known mystics or for those who do extraordinary things for the poor. Holiness (the Spirit) is for all those poor enough to welcome Jesus.*"
- Next Sunday is Pentecost. A feast where we celebrate the birth of the Church and the birth of the Holy Spirit in each of us. We should prepare to celebrate Pentecost by doing

something special this week. Something inspired by the Holy Spirit. Let's keep the Spirit busy. Let the Spirit free to guide you this week. Reach out to someone in need, do an unexpected kind act for someone. And may I suggest we all look deep into our hearts and find that person who hurt us and let's ask the spirit to help us forgive. And let's pray that most important prayer for them and for all those God has given us: That **they** come to know God.