

# Reflections on John 17

## Jesus' Prayer for His Disciples

*Jesus looked up to heaven and said: "Father, the hour has come! Give glory to Your Son that your Son may give glory to You" (John 17:1).*

This is the beginning of the prayer Jesus said for His disciples. He speaks to His Father about glory. The glory that Jesus speaks of means many things: strength, help, love, presence. This can be our prayer also. We pray that we might be given glory (God's strength, God's help, God's love, and God's presence), so that we might give back to the Father and His Son — our Master — the glory (praise, love, our presence).

*"inasmuch as you have given Him authority over all mankind, that He may bestow eternal life on those you gave Him" (John 17:2).*

We can pray with Jesus: "You, Jesus our Master, have given us authority (responsibility, care, concern) **for** others, so that we might share Your eternal life with those whom You have entrusted to us; we need to share our life, which is our relationship with You, our relationships with others, our relationship with ourselves; we need to share with others all those relationship that we have. We need to share with those You have entrusted to us." (Who? Who is my neighbor, my brother/sister? Read *Luke 10:25ff.*)

*"Eternal life is this: to know You, the only true God and to know Jesus Christ whom You sent" (John 17:3).*

To know is to be in relationship with God the Father, with Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit. To know is be prayerful. And we can do this only in the Holy Spirit.

*"I showed your glory (love, presence, strength, joy) on earth. I finished the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4).*

At the end of our lives can we say that as Jesus said it at the end of His life? The work which had been given to Jesus and to us is this: to spread the **GOoD News** (Gospel) that God is in love with us and that God wants us to come to God. God wants us to share that divine love.

*"O Father, give Me glory in Your presence now, the same glory I had with You before the world was made" (John 17:5).*

Jesus wants to be ONE with the Father — that is GLORY. Being in the presence of God; being in relationship with the Father. As Jesus is aware of the Father's presence with Him, He can do all things. So, too, we can do all things when we are aware of God's glory with us.

*"I have made Your name known to those given to Me out of the world" (John 17:6).*

Jesus shares the Father with us. He has shared His relationship with the Father with us. *Those you gave me* implies a responsibility for others. We, like Jesus, have been entrusted with others - our family, our Care Receivers, our fellow believers, our fellow workers. *Out of the world* means that we are not the world's, even though we are in the world. We live here, but belong to another realm. The things of the world is all that the world values: fame, money, selfishness, pleasure — thinking only of me, me, and me.

*"They belonged to You[, Father,] and You gave them to Me" (John 17:6).*

Everyone belongs to God, and God is sharing God's "children," God's people with us. They are not ours. We don't "possess" people. We are not to use them. They have been entrusted to us; we are to care for them, be responsible for them, love them, make the Father's love present to them.

*"They have obeyed your word" (John 17:6).*

St. Paul says how can others obey the Word unless they have heard the Word, and how can they hear the Word, unless it is preached to them. We must "preach" the Word — share the Word as it effects our life — share our relationship with God. That's what we are called to do.

*"Now they know that everything You gave Me comes from You" (John 17:7).*

Nothing we do in sharing our relationship with God is really ours. It has been given to us by God. God took the initiative. God called us.

## Reflections on John 17 (Cont.)

***"I gave them the message that You gave Me and they received it" (John 17:8).***

What message? What is God's message? God loves us. God cares for us. How did we receive the message? Think back, we were told: "God rewards us when we are good and punishes us when we are bad." The stress was on the later. We heard "Fear God." "Be good or else." Reflect on our relationship with authority [parents, police, church]. What is the message? In most cases, the message is "They care." But how is it brought forward? The way we often perceive authority: "They are out to get us." God, in Jesus, is trying to get the message of love over to us, without the authoritative implication of being out to get us.

***"They know it is true that I came from You, they believe that You sent Me" (John 17:8).***

Jesus is sending us as He was sent. But how will people "know" that He sent us to them? They will know if we preach the Master's same message; if we **live** the Master's life; if we bring His relationship with the Father to others.

***"I pray for them" (John 17:9).***

Do I really pray for other people, especially the persons whom I am called to serve? What does it mean to pray for them? Praying (like believing or knowing) means actively doing something more than cerebrally thinking about others and mentioning them by name. It implies being in relationship with them and bringing them into our prayer relationship with the Father, the Master, and the Spirit.

***"I pray not for the world, but those You gave Me, those who belong to You" (John 17:9).***

Do not all people belong to the Father? The world is sin, selfishness, Satan, and evil. The world in this context does not mean people as people, but what keeps people from being who they are meant to be. The world also refers to those who have sold out to the world and its values.

***"All I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine" (John 17:10).***

Everything we have, our possessions, our relationships, everything is the Lord's. Therefore, we need to give everything to the Lord. We cannot

hold back anything and claim it as ours. We need to be willing to let go of all for the sake of the Lord.

***"My glory is shown through them" (John 17:10).***

My relationship to you, Father, is seen in those whom you have given to me. This whole verse says that "our" ministry is not ours, it is the Lord's. The people we serve and with whom we share, they are not ours; they are not "my people," "my Care Receivers," "my family," they are God's. And it is our relationship with the Father (through the Master, and in the Holy Spirit) that gives us glory. And that glory (relationship with the Father) is seen in and through our relationship with others.

***"And now I am coming to You" (John 17:11).***

We are all called to be on the Way to the Father. We should be coming to the Father.

***"I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world" (John 17:11).***

We should be less and less in the world (selfishness, sin, etc.). We are called to follow Jesus; to share with others what He shared with us. And He shared with us what He shared with the Father. That's discipleship — to first learn from the Master and then go out and continue His work by helping others to learn how to be like the Master — discipling others.

My work as a disciple, as a servant, is/will be complete when I have helped others to learn what Jesus has helped me to learn and when I have challenged others to go out and proclaim the message of Jesus. I must keep this up until I have reached, touched, and shared with all those with whom the Lord has sent me to communicate.

***"O Holy Father! Keep them safe by the power of Your name, the name You gave Me, so that they may be one just as You and I are one" (John 17:11).***

"Keep them safe." Give them safety (*salus*) or salvation. Save them. Safety is ours through Jesus. But we can refuse this safety.

## Reflections on John 17 (Cont.)

*"The power of Your name."* There is power in all names, but especially in the name of God. **YHWH** is "the One is who is" or "The One is for us as the One who is." "The One who is present to us as the One who is." "The One who is in relationship with us as the One who is Relationship."

*"Father" - Abba*, Daddy, Lover of His children, provider, protector.

*"The name You have given Me"* **Jesus** means "God saves" or "God keeps safe." This was the name given Him before His birth (*Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31*).

*"So they may be one just as You and I are one."* How much "one" is the Father and Jesus? [I used the singular verb on purpose to emphasize their oneness.] Closer than any parent and child. They are one being and different personalities. They are more one than identical twins, than Siamese twins. They are one in thought, mind, heart, and purpose. And that's how one we are called to be, prayed to be.

*"While I was with them, I kept them safe by the power of Your name, the name You gave Me"* (*John 17:12*).

Jesus is still with the believer, the follower, the disciple. He is with us as **YHWH** ("The One is who is"). He is with us as **Emmanuel** ("God-with-us"). He is with us as **Jesus** ("God saves").

*"I protected them, and not one of them was lost except the one who was bound to be lost — that the scripture might come true"* (*John 17:12*).

What does the scripture say? Those who refuse to be with God will be lost. *Matt. 25:31ff* tells of those who will be lost: those who refuse to reach out to Jesus in others. Those who deny (**ἀπαρνέομαι** -*aparneomai*) that God is in others and thus reject God. St. John (*1 John 4:20*) reminds us that we cannot love God unless we love our neighbor. And what is love? To be in relationship — to share ourselves with others — to be one.

*"And now I am coming to You, and I say these things in the world so that they might have My joy in their hearts, and their joy may be complete"* (*John 17:13*).

We are on the journey to the Father and we must express this to others. And this should bring us joy.

We have a joyful challenge to follow, a joyful invitation to join the journey. We share our journey with others so that they can share our joy. I am reminded of *John 10:10* where Jesus said: *"I have come that they might have life and have it to the full."*

*"I gave them your Word, and the world has hated them for it, because they do not belong to the world, any more than I belong to the world"* (*John 17:14*).

*"I gave them your Word."* Jesus has entrusted to us His Gospel, His GOoD News. He gives it to us through His Body, the Church. He wants us to be part of Him, part of His Body and to continue to spread the GOoD News. But let us listen to what we can expect:

*"and the world has hated them for it, because they do not belong to the world, any more than I belong to the world."* We are going to be hated. Hated for not being part of the world. Hated for not going along with the worldly crowd. Hated because we are followers, disciples of the Master and not disciples of the world. Do I belong to the world or am I like Jesus, and do not belong to the world? Am I really ready to be hated, maybe even by close friends and relatives who are still belonging to the world?

*"I do not pray You to take them out of the world, but to guard them from the evil one"* (*John 17:15*).

We are called to be in the world but not of the world. We are to be leaven in the dough (*Matt. 12:33*). We are called to live lives which challenge the world, lives which speak to and against the world. What is to be our strength?

*"I pray you to guard them from the evil one."* Our strength is Jesus praying for us. He prays, intercedes with the Father, so that the Father will keep us safe by wrapping us in a holy environment, in a holy atmosphere, in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our protection from the Evil One. And, as we have all experienced, the Evil One does exist. He is real. Yet, with Jesus interceding for us, and the Holy Spirit enveloping us, we need not fear. St. Paul reminds us of this in his letter to the Romans. He speaks both of the intercessory power of the Holy Spirit and that nothing, not even evil powers, can separate us from the love of the Father poured out in Christ Jesus (*Romans 8:26-39*).

## Reflections on John 17 (Cont.)

***"They are not of the world, any more than I am of the world" (John 17:16).***

We must constantly ask ourselves, "Am I not of the world, just as Jesus was not of the world?" We need to break our bonds with the world. Not with individuals, but with lifestyles of the world: selfishness, fame, money, greed. The world is an attitude which is opposed to the Spirit of Jesus. Money is necessary and is needed to build up the Body of Christ. GOoD rapport is needed for the edification (building up) of the Church. Greed and fame, however, by any methods is not needed. They belong to the world, not to the Master and His followers.

***"Consecrate them by means of truth - `Your Word is truth'" (John 17:17)***

Jesus is praying for us. He asks that we may be more of the Father. He praises that we are the Father's. And the way we remain part of God is through the truth. As the quote speaks: "the truth hurts." The truth is we have not always belonged (ὁμολογέω - *homologeō*) to God. The truth may be that we still are partly of the world. The world still has a claim on us. That is the truth. Until we admit the truth, we are not able to be one. The **truth** is the Word of the Father, the Word made flesh, Jesus, the Master. The truth is we must be like the Word, like the Master. We must love as He loves us. We must teach as He taught. We must match ourselves to Him and realize and admit honestly and truthfully we do not match up and that truth will makes us more like the Word, more like our Master, Jesus.

***"As You have sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).***

That's the message of the retreat. Jesus was a disciple of the Father. He was then sent out (ἀποστέλλω - *apostello* - apostled) as the apostle of the Father. Jesus was then the minister (servant, διάκονος) of the Father. Jesus then "discipled" others. He then sent them out (He "apostled" them) and made them fellow ministers (servants). And that is the Apostolic Church, the Body of Christ, to which we belong. We are the modern apostolic church. We are being sent (ἀποστέλλω -

*apostello* - apostled). Before being sent out, before being apostles and ministers, we must first be disciples. We must first be taught, so we can teach others. We are still learning from the Master. That is why we are on retreat. That is why we spend time with the Word which is Truth, the Word which makes us "of the Master" and not of the world. We constantly and continuously need to be discipled, so we can go out and disciple others by first ministering to them. One way we are discipled is by humbly accepting correction. That's a hard one. When people correct us, we often want to excuse ourselves or make up reasons why we did something or did not do something else. The Lord Jesus, our Master, was discipled by the Father and the Holy Spirit — He spent whole nights in prayer and meditation. We need to be discipled. We need to pray, read, and learn how to be a better disciple of the Master.

***"I consecrate Myself for their sakes now, that they may be consecrated to you" (John 17:19)***

Another translation of this verse says: "*For their sakes I give Myself to you, in order that they, too, may truly belong to you.*" Jesus gave Himself to the Father. He belonged to the Father. How? and Why? HOW? By being humbled as a human, by being discipled, by sharing His relationship with the Father, by dying on the cross. WHY? So that we might belong to (be acknowledged by - ὁμολογέω - *homologeō*) the Father. So what should our response be? We need to give ourselves to the Father through Jesus, so that others might also belong to the Father. We do that by imitating the Master — being discipled, by sharing our relationship with the Father, by dying to self and living for others. In that way we show we belong to the Master and His Father.

## Reflections on John 17 (Cont.)

***"I do not pray for My disciples alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their word" (John 17:20).***

Jesus is praying for us as receivers and givers of the Word. We have been preached to and taught. We have been "evangelized." We have received the GOoD News. We have been discipled. We have received the Word and we believe because people before us were evangelized, discipled, and apostled. We are now being apostled (sent out) to evangelize and disciple and apostle others. Jesus is praying for us and praying for those to whom we minister. It is a great feeling to know that Jesus is praying for our ministry to others.

***"I pray that they may be one in us, that all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:21).***

"*I pray that they may be one.*" Jesus is praying that ALL of us be one. Do we seek that unity? Do we want to be one with that person who called us names? Do we want to be one with the person who hurt us? Jesus wants us to be one, to have at-onement with others.

"*O Father, may they be one in us, just as You are in Me, and I am in You.*" Jesus and the Father are so one. They are one being. They are in the perfect relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. No better relationship exists. They want us to be one in them. Jesus prays that we might be so one — be part of the Trinity — be one with the Father, with Himself, and with the Holy Spirit.

"*May they be one, so that the world will believe that You sent Me.*" If we are not one, then the world will have a harder time believing that Jesus came from the Father and that we are from Jesus. Our disunity is poor publicity for the GOoD News of the Master. Unity does not mean uniformity. We can be different, unique, special and still be one. The Father is different, unique, and special in reference to the Son, but they are one. Diversity in Unity is essential to God. Our God, the Blessed Trinity is essentially Diversity in Unity.

***"I have given them the glory You gave Me that they may be one, as we are one — I living in them, You living in Me" (John 17:22).***

Glory is the relationship with the Father. Jesus shares His relationship with the Father, so that we can be one. That glory, that relationship is also called **grace**. We have been given the gift of grace, of glory, or relationship with the Father through the Son in the Spirit. We are invited into an even closer relationship. Jesus constantly offers to us His relationship with His Father, with our Father. We can call God "Our Father" because Jesus has shared His grace, His glory, His relationship with the Father with us.

"*I living in them, You living in Me.*" Not only are we in Jesus and in the Father; they are in us. St. Paul spoke of this when he wrote, "I live, not I, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2: 20). St. John the Baptist said, "I must decrease and Christ must increase." God is within us, but we must let Him come out through us and work from within us."

***"[I pray] that their unity may be complete. So shall the world know that You sent Me, and that You love them as You love Me" (John 17:23).***

"*That their unity may be complete.*" Our unity must be total. We must be totally united. There is no room for disunity. We must be like a choir singing so much together that they sound like one voice.

"*So shall the world know that You sent Me, and that You love them as you love Me.*" Our unity shows that God loves us as He loves Jesus. If God loved some more than others, we would not have unity. The Father loves us as His daughters and sons. And that love is a sign to the world. Our acceptance of the Father's love, our living out His love for others is the way we show the world that true love is possible. We are the sacrament, the sign of God's love for others. There are some people who will never experience God's love except through us. We may be the only way they come to know God's love. We must be GOoD signs, GOoD representatives of His love. We must reflect our loving unity so that others may come to know God's loving unity, the Trinity.

## Reflections on John 17 (Cont.)

***"O Father, all those You gave Me, I would have in My company where I am, to see this glory of Mine which is Your gift to Me, because of the love You bore me before the world began" (John 17:24)***

"All those You gave Me." We have been given to Christ. We are His. And those whom we serve have been entrusted to us, to be led back to the Father. We must hand them over to the Father, just as Jesus has handed us to the Father. There is a time when we release all those in our care and give them back to the Father.

"I would have in My company where I am." Jesus is praying that we be with Him, that we be one with Him. He wants us to grow into Him, to grow into our heavenly inheritance. St. Paul speaks of this when he says that we must continue to grow into the full stature of Christ. And the way we can grow into Christ is to realize He is with us, helping us to grow, praying for us to be with Him.

"to see this glory of Mine which is Your gift to Me." We can see the glory, the grace, the relationship of Jesus and the Father. We have been given the gift. Once we see the glory, and experience the relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then we can continue to grow into the relationship ourselves.

"because of the love you bore Me before the world began." Just as the Father loved Jesus before the world was made, so has He loved each of us. Although we have not existed from time eternal, we have been in the mind and heart of the God from before the world was created. God has loved us uniquely from the beginning. He will never stop loving us. We can acknowledge (claim our belonging to — (ὁμολογέω - *homologeō*) His love. Or we can deny (ἀπαρνέομαι - *aparneomai*) His love. He will keep on loving us, for He cannot deny His love, for He is love, and He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

***"Just Father, the world has not know You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me" (John 17:25).***

The people of the world of selfishness do not want to know God because they think that they will have to give up themselves and lose themselves (which they will have to do); but what they will gain by doing that is far better. We now that Jesus is sent from the Father. And we, too, are sent by Jesus to continue His work. Knowing the Father is being in relationship with Him. We must constantly deepen that relationship. We must continually try to know Him better. And we can do that only as disciples — learners.

***"To them I have revealed Your name, and I will continue to reveal it so that Your love for Me may live in them, and I may live in them" (John 17:26).***

Jesus is constantly revealing the Father to us. We can never fully grasp the relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet we can be drawn into that relationship in an ever deepening manner. As we come to know the Master, He reveals His relationship with the Father in the Holy Spirit. And the more we are drawn into that relationship, the more enthusiastic (ἐν θεοῦ - *en theou*, in God) we become to share our relationship with others. We come to a point that we cannot help but share our relationship. We are in love, and we want the world to know.

Jesus prays that the Father's love for Jesus may be in us. Jesus want us to have the same love He has for the Father. Like a beloved who wants his/her family to experience the love he/she is experiencing for his/her beloved, so much does Jesus want us to experience the Father's love. Thus he wants to be in us, so that the Father will love us as He sees Jesus in us.

