

Sermon for Easter 7C  
Sunday, June 2, 2019  
“Somebody’s Praying for Me”

Text: John 17:20-26

I speak to you in the name of the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

*Jesus prayed for his disciples, and then he said, “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one.”*

Often when I attend clergy meetings, or gatherings of my Facebook Bible Study group, or other gatherings of the faithful, there is a period at the end of our time together when we break up into small groups to share the highs and lows of our lives over the previous week, and then we are invited to pray for the person immediately to our right or left. It is a powerful moment in which we share what’s going on in our personal lives. There is something unsettling about praying for someone I don’t know very well; it is even more unsettling hearing someone who doesn’t know me very well pray for me. It takes a lot for me to let myself be vulnerable enough to tell a stranger about a personal joy or struggle in my life, but it is at the same time both an enlightening and comforting experience knowing in that moment that somebody is praying for *me*.

The passage that we just heard from the Gospel according to St. John is part of what is known as “the high priestly prayer of Jesus” that he prayed just before he was to be betrayed by Judas Iscariot and handed over to suffering and death—an chain of events that would culminate in his resurrection and establish the risen Christ Jesus as the great high priest. In that prayer, Jesus would pray for the well-being of his disciples and anyone else who would come to believe in him, including our very selves over two thousand years later. It is a powerful testimony of our faith in God through Jesus Christ that transcends both time and space to know that even then, Jesus was praying for us today.

During the Easter season, we spend a great deal of time focusing on our witness as Christians in proclaiming the Easter message that we have seen the Lord. We talk a lot about how we are commissioned by Jesus Christ himself to go out into the world and spread the good news, the Gospel of

Christ, to the ends of the earth, baptizing them and making disciples of them; Jesus said that if we do that, he will be with us to the end of the age—in other words, always. In Eastertide, we focus on our going out and doing something. But, our Gospel lesson today invites us and reminds us that inasmuch as we are expected as disciples to be active participants in doing, we are also participants in receiving as well. Jesus prayed for the well-being and success of his disciples present and future that we would have the courage to be witnesses for him in our daily lives, endurance in the face of adversity and persecution, and the hope that we would remain united as one.

Think about what an amazingly comforting thing it is to know that somebody is praying for you. I think that the message for us today, in this liminal time of the Easter season when we remember and reflect on the time after Jesus ascended into heaven to sit once again at the right hand of the Father in the unity of the triune God and await the coming of the Holy Spirit, is that we continue to lift each other in prayer for the well-being, endurance, patience, and success of each other. Every week we print in the bulletins the names of those with immediate needs for whom we pray, and once-a-month we include those persons with ongoing needs. Those names are to be included in your daily prayers. It's a long list of names, so you could divide up the list and pray for a few at a time over the course of the week and month. Beginning today and every first Sunday of the month for a while we will take up a second collection at the Offertory to help our parish community replace money we borrowed from our own investments and help with the present needs of furnishing our new parish hall, taking care of trees that are threatening our buildings and planting new ones, hiring a parish administrator and sexton, purchasing adequate and necessary signage for the church, getting our bells in working order again, getting a permanent sound system, and allowing us to maintain or high level of worship, music, and ministry to each other and the community. During that special collection, we will kneel and pray for our parish, so that we can continue to be effective disciples for Jesus Christ.

Isn't it a wonderfully powerful thing to know that somebody is praying for you! Every month on the first Thursday of the month, our cell of the Holy House of Our Lady of Walsingham and St. Martin de Porres gathers

to pray the rosary and ask our blessed Mother Mary to offer prayers to God on our behalf. We and Christians worldwide ask for the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary along with all the saints, because she holds a special and primary place among the saints in the heart of God for having given her whole self so that God could become man and teach humanity how to live better and be more like the image of God that we are. I would like to see more people participating in our monthly devotion, learning about the way the universal church catholic has depended on Mary for her prayers throughout the ages, and to be comforted in knowing that she is praying for you.

As we enter the final days of the great fifty days of Easter, which will conclude next week on Pentecost, let us truly live into our mission of oneness in fellowship by praying for each other, praying for our parish, praying for our community, and praying for our world. Life is full of joys to celebrate and sorrows to endure; let us hold up in prayer the families in our parish who experienced losses this week. And let us never forget that God is faithful, that “he preserves the lives of his saints and delivers them from the hand of the wicked,” as today’s psalm boldly declared, and know that in the midst of the joys and sorrows of your life, that somebody is praying for you. Amen.