

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER



Keep Us Close

God of hope,
you sent Jesus into the world
to teach us how to be in relationship
with you.

You heard the desire of your Son
to keep his followers close.

Guide us when we ask for direction.
Strengthen us when our
stamina falters.

Assure us when we feel discouraged.
Show us the path of life,
and help us remain close
in the bonds of love and faith.

Through Christ our risen Lord. Amen.

Sunday, May 21, 2023

Love One Another



Today's readings: Acts 1:12–14; Psalm 27:1, 4, 7–18 (13); 1 Peter 4:13–16; Ephesians 1:17–23; John 17:1–11a. In a heartfelt prayer the night before he dies, Jesus professes God's desire to be close to us. The prayer comes after Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with the disciples and stunned his followers by washing their feet.

During a long talk after the meal, Jesus predicts what will happen to the disciples and he gives them a new commandment—to love one another. He tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. He promises he will send the Holy Spirit to help and guide them. At the end of this discourse, Jesus turns his eyes to heaven for an intimate prayer to God, his *abba*, for his disciples.

On the Seventh Sunday of Easter we always hear part of this prayer, which comprises John chapter 17. Reading like a stream of conscious thought, Jesus implores the Father to keep his disciples close—to strengthen and sustain the bonds already formed. Though Jesus prayed for his beloved disciples on that night, the prayer is also meant for us today. Jesus implores each of us to remain close in the bonds of love and faith. As we near the end of the Easter season, we step back to consider our life with Christ. What opportunities have you seized to remain close to the risen Lord and grow in faith?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, May 22 Eternally Bound

Jesus prepares his disciples for times when they will be scattered and feel alone. He assures them again that though they may be separated, they will never be abandoned. Their bonds, permanently forged in the Holy Spirit, will bring them peace in the midst of challenges. So it is for us today. We are bound together with an invisible thread in the community of faith. *Today's readings: Acts 19:1–8; Psalm 68:2–3ab, 4–5acd, 6–7ab; John 16:29–33.*

Tuesday, May 23 Remain Close

Jesus affirms God's desire to be close to us in his heartfelt prayer on behalf of his disciples the night before he died. From today through Thursday, we hear this prayer in its entirety in the Gospel readings. Jesus ardently prays that we remember his teachings, stay close to one another, and remain close to God the Father. Sometimes we struggle to believe that God wants this loving relationship with us. Read John 17 in one sitting with this in mind. It is a powerful antidote to doubt. *Today's readings: Acts 20:17–27; Psalm 68:10–11, 20–21; John 17:1–11a.*

Wednesday, May 24 Farewell

Take note of the parallel scenes between today's reading from Acts and the Gospel reading from John 17. Paul speaks to the community at Ephesus as he departs on his journey to death. Jesus speaks his prayer-filled goodbyes to his disciples on the eve of his arrest. Both Paul and Jesus insist that their strength in resisting the Evil One is rooted in the Holy Spirit. So it is with us to this day. The Holy Spirit serves as our armor and source of unity for the life of the world. *Today's readings: Acts 20:28–38; Psalm 68:29–30, 33–35a, 35bc–36ab; John 17:11b–19.*

Thursday, May 25 Show Me the Path of Life

At the heart of today's readings, we pray Psalm 16:11, "You will show me the path of life." This prayer reflects St. Paul's experience throughout his ministry. At every turn he receives the Lord's guidance to show him where to go, what to say, and how to invite new believers to faith. This verse is also at the heart of Jesus' ardent prayer to the Father on behalf of his beloved disciples. Make it the heart of your daily prayer as well. *Today's readings: Acts 22:30; 23:6–11; Psalm 16:1–2a and 5, 7–8, 9–10, 11; John 17:20–26.*

Friday, May 26 Feed My Lambs

The last resurrection appearance in John's Gospel offers a perfect opportunity for the prayer practice called *Ignatian contemplation*. In your imagination, place yourself on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias with the disciples in their final conversation with Jesus. Notice the details: the sunrise, waves lapping on the shore, salty scent of the sea and caught fish, smoke of the charcoal fire, the disciples crowding close to hear Jesus speak. Jesus has powerful words for us to hear today: I love you. Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Follow me. *Today's readings: Acts 25:13b–21; Psalm 103:1–2, 11–12, 19–20ab; John 21:15–19.*

Saturday, May 27 Stay Focused

John's Gospel ends with Jesus' command to Peter to focus on following him. When Peter looks sideways to ask about a fellow disciple, Jesus replies, "What concern is it of yours?" (John 21:22). God's concern is not rooted in comparing disciple to disciple. It is part of the human condition to get distracted by what others are doing and to measure ourselves against our perceptions of others. Jesus' final words strongly counteract that temptation—stay focused! *Today's readings: Acts 28:16–20, 30–31; Psalm 11:4, 5 and 7; John 21:20–25.*

