Thursday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Gospel text (*Jn* 17:20-26): Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed saying: "I pray not only for these, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.

Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them."

"I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word"

Fr. Joaquim PETIT Llimona, L.C.
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Today, we find a solid basis for trust in the Gospel: "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word..." (Jn 17:20). It is Jesus' heart, which, in the intimacy of Jesus with his disciples, opens up the inexhaustible treasures of His Love. He wants to strengthen their hearts overwhelmed by the sense of farewell that, during the Last Supper, the Master's words and gestures have left them with. It is Jesus' unfailing prayer that goes up to the Father, pleading for them. What a confidence and strength will they find in this prayer throughout their apostolic mission! Amidst all the difficulties and dangers they have to face, this prayer will go all the way with them to become the source where they will find the strength and courage to give the final testimony of their faith with the offering of their own life.

We should let the reality of Jesus' prayer for his disciples to reach our lives, too: "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me..." These words travel through time and centuries to attain, with the same intensity they were once said, the hearts of every true believer.

In the living memory of St. John Paul II's visit to Spain back in 2003, we find in his words the echo of Jesus' prayer for his disciples: “With open arms I will hold you all in my heart —said the Pontiff before more than a million people—. The memory of these days will become my prayer as I ask for peace in fraternal coexistence for you all, encouraged by Christian hope that never disappoints.” St. Leo the Great, another Pope far in the past, also made an exhortation that, after many centuries have reached our heart too: “No one, however weak, is denied a share in the victory of the cross. No one is beyond the help of the prayer of Christ. His prayer brought benefit to the multitude that raged against him. How much more does it bring to those who turn to him in repentance”.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “I feel that your affections are being lifted up with me to the things that are above. It has been good for us to have been in the common light, good to have been glad therein, good to have rejoiced therein; but when we part from one another, let us not depart from Him” (Saint Augustine)

- “The martyr’s fidelity event to the death and the proclamation of the Gospel to all people are rooted in God’s love and in the witness we must bear in our life to this Love” (Francis)

- “… Jesus himself prayed at the hour of his Passion, and does not cease praying to his Father, for the unity of his disciples: ‘That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, so that the world may know that you have sent me’ (Jn 17:21). The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 820)