

May 26th: Memorial of Saint Philip Neri, Priest

Gospel text (Jn 17,20-26): Jesus said, «I pray not only for these but also for those who through their word will believe in me. May they all be one as you Father are in me and I am in you. May they be one in us; so the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the Glory you have given me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. Thus they shall reach perfection in unity and the world shall know that you have sent me and that I have loved them just as you loved me.

»Father, since you have given them to me, I want them to be with me where I am and see the Glory you gave me, for you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world has not known you but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. As I revealed your Name to them, so will I continue to reveal it, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I also may be in them».

«May they be one in us»

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Today, in this Gospel for the feast of St. Philip Neri, Jesus asks the Father for the gift of unity among his followers: «Father, may they be one in us, as you in me and I am in you» (Jn 17:21). This unity of the believers for which Jesus prays is not just a sort of communion or fellowship among the believers, but a oneness which is the reflection of the unity of the Three Divine Persons: «May they be one, as we are one».

Is such unity possible for us? Can we be one as the Father and Son are one? Yes, otherwise Jesus would not have prayed for it. It is possible because the same Holy Spirit, that makes the Father and Son one, is given to us to make us one. St. Paul says, «every one of you that has been baptized has been clothed with Christ» (Gal 3:27). The Spirit breaks down all the barriers that exist between us: the barriers of nationality, race, culture, language, status, possessions... When this happens the world, surprised by this miracle, will say as in the early Church, «See how they love one another» and believe in Jesus Christ.

St. Philip Neri received this love of Christ into his heart and communicated to everyone he met: to the sick in the hospitals, to the people he met on the streets, in stores and work rooms. An average of 40 labourers would come to him for confessions daily on their way to work, before day break. Many cardinals, bishops and priests and countless laypeople were his regular penitents. He was always filled with Christ's joy in his heart and communicated it to all especially to the youth for whom he organized games: «Rejoice in the Lord, again I say rejoice» (Phil 4:4). Following the example of St. Philip Neri let us bring this love to everyone we meet.