November 12th: Memorial of Saint Josaphat, Bishop and Martyr

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.”

“The love with which you loved me may be in them”

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Today we pray to the Lord that the "Bread of Heaven grants us the spirit of strength and peace that sustained St. Josaphat, bishop and martyr, so that following his example, we dedicate our lives to fight for the honor and unity of the Church" ("Prayer after communion"). Born in Ukraine and son of parents of Orthodox religion, St. Josaphat (1580-1623) converted to Catholicism and entered the Order of St. Basil. In 1617 he was consecrated bishop. Shortly before, a group of Orthodox bishops had entered into communion with the Pope: Saint Jehoshaphat joined the cause without saving effort.

Jesus, in his priestly prayer, prayed for the unity of his followers. Who could have imagined that, despite the Lord's pleas, the desired unity would be so arduous and expensive? It cost St. Josaphat’s life! (It is protomartyr of the re-unification of Christianity). The strictness of the human heart, even that of the "believing heart", is surprising. Jesus Christ begged the Father "that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them" (Jn 17,26). We have the Love of God, the same love with which the Father loves the Son! What else do we want? With this "rain" of love, how are we divided? (even divided to death). We have a long way to go to win in love for freedom and in love for obedience...

Actually, the problem is that we don't really love; We don't love each other as God loves. Love gladly leads to service. Thus, Christ, being God himself, "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave... he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death" (Flp 2:7.8). He came to serve (cf. Mt 20:28): there we see Him, in the Cenacle, without the mantle, wearing a towel - that is, dressed like a servant - washing our feet ... Love attracts, love unites. Saint Josaphat "began to devote himself to the restoration of unity, with such force and, at the same time, with such softness and such fruit, that his own adversaries called him "thief of souls" (Pius XI).