

(S) EASTER 7

(MAY 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2020)

**Readings for Today:** Acts 1: 12 – 14; Psalm 27 (26); I Peter 4: 13 – 16; John 17: 1 – 11.

*On this Sunday between Ascension Day and Pentecost the Church gives us the prayer of Jesus which ends his addresses to the disciples at the Last Supper – divided over the three years of the cycle. It would be good to read the whole of chapter 17 before studying this week's section.*

The principal theme of these first eleven verses is glory – an idea which is found throughout the fourth Gospel. In the Prologue (1: 1 – 18) we read: *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have gazed on his glory, glory as the of the only-begotten Son from the Father.*

This *glory* has an inner and an outer meaning: its 'inner' meaning is what someone is worth – so in the case of God it is the quality which demands worship. Its 'outer' meaning is the revealing of that worth – as when Isaiah saw the LORD enthroned in the Temple.

Throughout the gospel there are occasions when the glory of the incarnate Word, normally hidden, is revealed in signs for those who believe (for example at the wedding in Cana). But towards the end of his ministry Jesus announces that *the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified* (12: 23), and goes on to speak of his approaching death as his being *lifted up to draw all to himself* (v. 32). Now, on the eve of that death, he prays *Father, the hour has come, glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you*. A few verses later he makes it clear that the glory for which he asks is *the glory which I had with you before the universe existed*. Jesus is praying that, because he has revealed the glory of the Father by completing the task for which he was sent, he will himself be revealed in his pre-existing glory, as the eternal Word and Son of God

A second theme of these verses is the contrast between those whom the Father has given Jesus – that is the disciples – and 'the world' (*kosmos*). The evangelist uses the word *kosmos* in two different senses. In the early chapters of the gospel it usually means what we would mean by the word – the whole of the universe created by God. Of this world he writes *God so loved the world that he gave his only Son* (3:16), and *I came not to judge the world but to save the world* (12:47). But in the farewell discourse, including this prayer, the evangelist sometimes means 'human society organized without regard to God', or even 'society as controlled and used by the devil'. That is why Jesus says *I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me...keep them in your name... that they may be one, even as we are one*.

*Pray for the unity of all Christian believers – those who are the Father's gift to our Lord Jesus.*