

## **Jesus Prays for Unity** (7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year B)

### **Acts 1:15-17, 20-26—Peter and the Eleven Replace Judas**

1. Death of Judas: “falling headlong he burst open in the middle” (1:18; cf. Matt 27:3-10)
2. Office of “Bishop”: “may another take his office (Greek *episkopēn*)” (1:20; Ps 109:8)
3. Casting Lots: in Judaism, *priests* were organized by “lots” (1 Chron 24:1-5)

The *divisions of the sons of Aaron* were these. The sons of Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar... With the help of Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, David organized them according to the appointed duties in their service. *They organized them by lot*, all alike, for there were officers of the sanctuary and officers of God... The first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah... (1 Chronicles 24:1, 3, 5, 7)

### **Psalm 103:1-2, 11-12, 19-20—The Lord Has Set His Throne in Heaven**

1. Infinite Love: God’s “steadfast love” is “as high” as “the heavens” (v. 11)
2. Infinite Forgiveness: he puts our sins “as far as the east is from the west” (v.12)

### **1 John 4:11-16—God is Love**

1. Love: “If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected” (4:12)
2. Truth: “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him” (4:15)

### **John 17:11-19—Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer at the Last Supper**

1. Unity: “that they may be one (Latin *ut unum sint*), even as we are one” (17:11)
2. Protection:
  - a. “I have guarded them; none... is lost except the son of perdition” (17:12)
  - b. “I do not pray you should take them out of the world” (17:15)
  - c. “but that you should *keep them from the evil one*” (17:15; cf. Our Father)
3. Holiness:
  - a. “They are not of the world” (17:16)
  - b. “Sanctify (Greek *hagiazō*) them in the truth” (17:17)
4. Priesthood: “I consecrate (*hagiazō*) myself, that they also may be consecrated” (17:19)

“Now this is what you shall do to them to *consecrate* (Greek *hagiaseis*) *them*, that they may serve me as *priests*... (Exodus 29:1; LXX)

### **St. John Paul II: The Prayer of Jesus and the Unity of Christians**

Jesus himself, at the hour of his Passion, prayed “that they may all be one” (John 17:21). This unity, which the Lord has bestowed on his Church and in which he wishes to embrace all people, is not something added on, but stands at *the very heart of Christ’s mission*... *To believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the Church; to desire the Church means to desire the communion of grace which corresponds*

to the Father's plan from all eternity. Such is the meaning of Christ's prayer: “*Ut unum sint*”. (John Paul II, Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, no. 9 [May 25, 1995])

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection (7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year B)

1. Why do the apostles cast “lots” to replace Judas? What does the Old Testament background of this action reveal about who they think they are? (cf. 1 Chronicles 24).

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2. Why do you think that one of the last things Jesus prayed for at the Last Supper was that his disciples “may be one” (John 17:10)?

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3. How does Jesus’ language in his “High Priestly Prayer” reveal that he sees himself and his disciples as priests of the new covenant?

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### For Further Study

1. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Ut Unum Sint*, On Commitment to Ecumenism [May 25, 1995]. A timely, beautiful, authoritative, and complete explanation of the meaning of Jesus’ desire for unity amongst his disciples in the light of present-day ecumenism. A must read for all Christians.
2. Joel C. Elowsky, *John* (2 vols.; Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IV; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 2.243-54. A wonderful collection of ancient Christian interpretations of John’s Gospel and Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer.