



HEAR JESUS

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

CYCLE A

Acts 1:12-14
1 Peter 4:13-16
John 17:1-11a

GATHERING

(An unlit candle and a bible open to today's first reading are centered in the gathering place.)

This week we reflect on what the disciples did following Jesus' ascension. They formed a space of prayer in anticipation of the Holy Spirit promised to them. In this week's gospel we hear Jesus pray. Last week we considered our *soul prints*. *(Members share their experience of exploring and identifying their soul prints in the events of the week gone by.)*

OPENING PRAYER

(The candle is lighted. The community joins in singing a familiar "Alleluia" ..)

Leader: From the first letter of John:
Little children,
let us love in deed and in truth

and not merely talk about it.
God is greater than our hearts
and all is known to him.
His commandment is this:
we are to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ,
and love one another as he commanded us.
Those who keep his commandments remain in him
and he in them.
And this is how we know that he remains in us:
from the Spirit that he gave us.

1 John 3:18, 20b, 23-24

(The community pauses for some minutes of silent prayer.)

Focus Question

Who are the people in your life to whom you can say anything – to whom you can reveal your real person?

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

(Scriptures are read aloud with a pause between readings.)

Commentary

How would you feel if one to whom you looked for companionship, direction and leadership suddenly left you? I think I would have been really upset at the ascension of Jesus. I would have felt abandoned. I probably would have gone back to the city, but perhaps not back to the prayer community. That would have been a mistake. The readings this week can help us grasp the notion of prayer and the importance of community in our prayer life.

The apostles, Mary and others gathered in the upper room and prayed as they awaited the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus before he left them. They gathered in a climate of unfailing prayer, a prayer that acknowledged their dependence on, and openness to God. Such are dispositions that make possible the prayer-like talks we might have with those we love and who love us.

The gospel passage lets us listen in on Jesus' prayer to the Father. The entire 17th chapter is the prayer of Jesus. It is the culmination of his farewell talk with the disciples (chapters 14-16). The verses selected for this week's liturgy express Jesus' petition that his work culminate in the Father's glory. He prays, too, for his disciples and for the mission they are to carry on after he is gone. The work of the Father, started in Jesus, continues through the disciples and ultimately through all who accept the invitation of the gospel.

Prayer is both listening for, and speaking to God. It happens not just at stated times and special places. It is a state of mind, a disposition of heart. We need some personal times of prayer, but we can also meet God in so many different ways every day. We meet God in others, in nature. We even feel God's presence to us when we are alone.

Peter's words serve this week as an encouragement to pray in the face of suffering. Sometimes when difficult things happen in our lives, we turn first to others before we turn to God. It is as if we hold God on reserve as our last resort. Sure, we should turn to others, but God should be so much a part of our lives that we spontaneously seek God's support in every part of our lives.

Jesus' prayer to his Father is very natural and direct. It bespeaks a loving relationship. We are invited to participate in that relationship. God invites us into a closeness that can animate our lives in a way that the world can never offer. Whether we feel joyful and in peace or alienated and isolated, God calls us to experience his presence in the whole of our lives. Prayer is a doorway to that experience.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

(The community pauses in silence to reflect on the readings and the questions that follow.)

- ◆ What different kinds of prayer have you experienced?
- ◆ Name some kinds of prayer you have heard about or observed, but have not tried yourself. Why not?
- ◆ Speak of a prayer experience that made a change in your life. How did it change your life and relationship to God or others?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ If you are a grandparent, make a surprise offer to babysit. Explain that you are doing so to give your son/daughter or son-in-law/daughter-in-law a chance to stop and do nothing, but take time for leisure. .quiet and perhaps., even prayer.
- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week to just sit and listen for God.
- ◆ Obtain a copy of Ronald Rolheiser's, **The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality** (Doubleday Press). Schedule twenty minutes several times a week to explore the search for spirituality the book addresses. Read slowly. Savor the book.
- ◆ Offer your help in support of the faith formation program for young people in your parish. Call the director of religious education in your parish to see how you may be of assistance.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(A selection of instrumental music plays quietly in the background as the community prays in silence.)

*(The facilitator invites prayer of praise, thanksgiving and petition. To each prayer, members respond, "**Hear us, Lord, we pray.**")*

Leader: Father, help us keep in mind that Christ our Savior lives with you in glory and promised to remain with us until the end of time. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

All: Amen.

(Members join hands to pray the Lord's Prayer.)