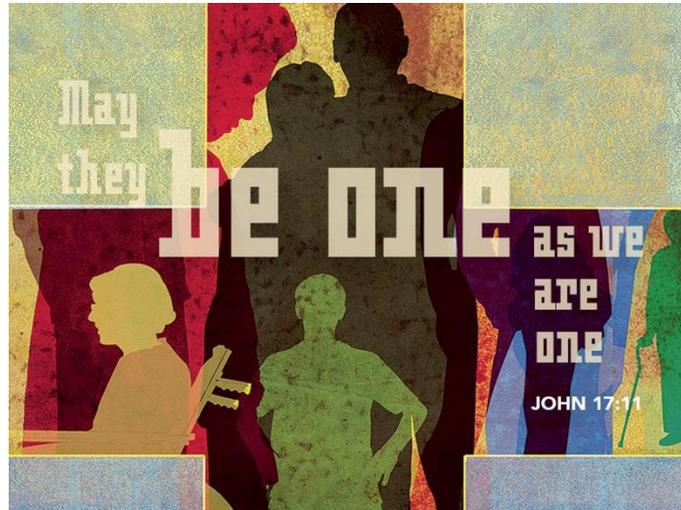


Sunday, May 24, 2020
Seventh Sunday of Easter
Grace Lutheran Church
Somers Point, NJ 08244
Interim Pastor: Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf



“Jesus Prays For Us”

Let us pray: "O God, early in the morning, I cry to you. Help me to pray, and to concentrate my thoughts on you: I cannot do this alone. This is the introduction of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's morning prayer. "I cannot do this alone" these words are a comfort, I need God's help in praying. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is praying for his disciples and us, "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me. So that they may be one, as we are one."

In my first reading what popped in my head was the phrase "one for all and all for one." The three musketeers in a French novel by Alexander Dumas 1844. With the phrase "one for all" you are saying that each person contributes to the whole. If there is trouble, every single person should do their part to help out. The other phrase "all for one" means that nobody is left behind. Jesus prays, "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

In *May's Living Lutheran*, our Presiding Bishop Eaton shares our unity with Christ. She writes, "There is an Irish saying: 'It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.' I am writing this at the end of March. I don't know what the world will look like when you read this at the beginning of May. COVID-19 has the world sheltering-in-place...For me, one of the cruelest effects of this pandemic is that we cannot gather...And yet, in the deepest, truest sense, we are connected to one another." In baptism we are united with Christ and are members one of another. Baptism makes a difference and makes us different. We are no

longer lone travelers making our way through this life. We don't have to go it alone. In fact, we cannot, because, in Christ, we are knit into one body. And just as surely as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one ...so are we. Baptism makes us different. The immutable gracious truth that we are God's makes it possible for us to feel the connection with each other, even, and especially, when we are separated. This is a great paradox- the more we are separated from each other, the deeper our connection to each other becomes. I find myself thinking about family and friends more often now that we can't be physically together. Jesus prays, "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

Our oneness with Christ also connects us to each other. In my devotions, I read "A Year with C. S. Lewis." His "Carriers of Christ" emphasized our Christ connection. C. S. Lewis explains, "Some of you may feel that this is very unlike your own experience. You may say 'I've never had the sense of being helped by an invisible Christ, but I often have been helped by other human beings.' That is rather like the woman in the first war who said that if there were a bread shortage it would not bother her house because they always ate toasts. If there is no bread there will be no toast. If there were no help from Christ, there would be no help from other human beings. (Christ) works on us in all sorts of ways: not only through what we think our "religious life." (Christ) works through Nature, through our own bodies, through books, sometimes through experiences which seem (at the time) anti-Christian...(Christ) works on us through each other. (People) are mirrors, or 'carriers of Christ' to others...Sometimes unconscious carriers...People who were not Christians themselves helped me to Christianity. But usually it is those who know Him that bring Him to others. That is why the Church, the whole body of Christians showing Him to one another is so important. You might say that when two Christians are following Christ together there is not twice as much Christianity as when they are apart, but sixteen times as much."

"One for all, and all for one" We are not alone. Jesus prays, "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

Now the peace which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen