

One-ing with God

Easter 7(C)

Written by Barbara Toman

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A very few thoughts on our Gospel reading — a beautiful passage from what is, in my opinion, the most beautiful of the Gospels.

This passage is the culmination of what scholars call "The Farewell Discourse" — Jesus' final words to his disciples before the Passion. Jesus has washed his disciples' feet, they have broken bread, and now Jesus is having a very tender conversation with his closest friends. He has given them The Great Commandment, that they love one another even as he has loved them.

And now Jesus is praying not just for the disciples, but for all of us: "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word" – that's us — "that they all may be one."

In the sort of sinuous discourse that John loves, Jesus talks about unity —about what Julian of Norwich calls "one-ing" – being one with God. It's this beautiful intertwining of Spirit that makes us One with God.

How do we approach that unity? What does unity even look like in a fractured world, where sorrow and violence seem to be present at every moment?

I wish I could claim to have come up with this, but I'm cribbing now from the Rev. Phil Jackson, the rector of Trinity Church Wall Street in New York. In his Ascension Day sermon last Thursday evening, Father Phil spoke to the dark and frightening times we seem to live in – a time when evil seems to be everywhere we turn.

Father Phil tells a story from Jewish tradition: In the beginning, God's light — the light of God — was shattered. It lay in shards everywhere. Those shards of light are in all of creation – in all people, in all things. Our job – the job Jesus is talking about in this passage – is to do the hard work of gathering those broken shards of light and putting them back together. We go about that work in whatever way we can, each and every one of us.

In this Sunday's morning passage, we are called to unite with the light of each one of us, and ultimately with God's light. Because right now, the world needs light. Amen.

--Barbara Toman