



7th Sunday of Easter

1st June 2025



*Let us Answer Jesus Prayer:
By finding our Identity in
Christ before our denomination*

Main verse:

"I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:20-22)

Main Point:

Jesus prayed for all believers to be united as one, just as He is one with the Father, so that the world would believe in Him. True Christian unity transcends denominations and is only possible through the transforming grace of the gospel, which makes us one body, one family, and one temple in Christ.

Intro |

Imagine walking into an old-fashioned ice cream parlour on a hot summer's day. The glass cabinet is bursting with tub after tub of creamy goodness—vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, mint choc chip, lemon myrtle, pavlova swirl. Everyone's excited, but it's obvious we all like different flavours. Some are die-hard vanilla fans. Others love liquorice (somehow!). But no one protests at what the other prefers. Why? Because what unites us is bigger than our preferences—it's our shared love of ice cream.

In a similar way, as followers of Jesus, our identity in Him unites us more deeply than our "flavour" of church or denomination. We might express our faith differently, but we are all part of one Body—with Christ as our Head.

In John 17, just before going to the cross, Jesus prayed a powerful prayer. He could have prayed for courage, protection, or justice—but His deepest desire was *unity*.

"I pray... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you... so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:20–21)

Let's explore three simple but powerful truths about Christian unity and how it shapes us.

Point 1: Unity is Jesus' Heart for His People

First, let's be clear: unity doesn't mean all faiths or religions are the same. Jesus said, *"I am the way... no one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6). He was praying for unity among His followers—those who believe in Him across every denomination. That's what we call ecumenical unity.

What unites all Christians? It's not just our shared love for Jesus—it's our commitment to the truths He taught. Jesus said, *"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching"* (John 14:23).

Many of those truths are captured in the Apostles' Creed, which believers across denominations declare together: *"We believe in God, the Father Almighty... and in Jesus Christ, His only Son... We believe in the holy catholic church..."* That word "catholic" doesn't mean Roman Catholic—it means universal. The church across time and place. But let's be honest—some of us still feel uneasy when we hear "Catholic." There's been hurt, misunderstanding, and division. And yet, despite that history, something incredible recently reminded me of the unity we're called to.

Point 2: Unity Reminds Us Who We Really Are

A few weeks ago, millions watched as a new Pope was announced—Pope Leo XIV. Over 200,000 gathered in St Peter's Square, millions watched via livestream. Whether or not you're Catholic, the moment mattered. It reminded us that the church, in all its expressions, still carries a voice—and what that voice says can impact the world. But it was what happened *after* that made the biggest impression. As the new Pope prepared to give his first homily, many expected Latin or Italian. Instead, he spoke in English.

It silenced the crowd. This dramatic departure from tradition was seen by many as a reaching out—a declaration that the good news is for everyone. From a single mum in Brazil, to a teenager in the States, to a believer in rural Kenya. He spoke in the language of the people. It wasn't just a Roman Catholic moment—it was a call to unity.

It challenged me. Do we put our identity as an Anglican (or Baptist or Pentecostal or Catholic) above our identity as a Christian? There's a difference between denominational identity and Christian identity. One can be helpful. But the other is foundational.

The Apostle Paul captures this beautifully in Ephesians 2:

"You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the chief cornerstone... In him, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit."
(Eph 2:19–22)

We belong to one another. Whether Baptist, Adventist, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, Uniting, or even Amish—we're not rival clubs or separated camps. We're brothers and sisters in one family, with one Father. But Jesus prayed for unity for a reason. He knew it wouldn't be easy.

Point 3: Unity Takes Humility (and a Lot of Jesus)

Unity isn't tidy. It takes humility, grace, and the love of Jesus. It means listening well. Laying down pride. Holding tight to the essentials of the gospel—and letting go of preferences that divide us unnecessarily.



There's an old Peanuts cartoon where Lucy demands that Linus change the TV channel. When he resists, she holds up her hand and says, "These five fingers... when I curl them into a single unit, they become a weapon terrible to behold." Linus quickly asks, "Which channel?" Then he looks at his own fingers and mutters, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

Why *can't* the church get organized like that? What stops us curling together into something stronger? Often, it's our fear. Or pride. Or just the weight of history. But Jesus reminds us that unity is *not optional*—it's part of our witness. Remember Jesus prayed, "*May they be one... so the world may believe...*" (John 17:21) And just like that moment in St Peter's Square, unity still has the power to make the world stop and take notice.

Do you know what the Pope's first words were in that homily? He quoted Psalm 98: "*A new song I will sing unto the Lord, for He has done marvellous things.*" What a word for the church right now. Despite our fractured world and messy history, God is doing marvellous things. He's still building His church. And the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

When we curl together—across denominations, across styles, across generations—we become a powerful force for good. We become a witness to a watching world. A signpost to the grace of Jesus. Let's return to the ice cream image for a moment. No one expects us all to like the same flavour. But we all love ice cream.

Likewise, no one expects every church to look the same or worship in exactly the same way. But we are all called to love Jesus—and to love one another. Let's not let our different flavours keep us apart. Let's celebrate the richness of our shared faith.

Let's pray with Jesus: "That they may be one... so that the world may believe." **Amen.**

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for the beautiful gift of unity that we have through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Teach us to love one another deeply, to lay down our differences at the foot of the cross, and to walk in step with Your Spirit. May we be one, just as You and Jesus are one, so the world will see Your love through us. Strengthen us to live as Your united people, filled with grace, truth, and peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Reflection Questions

Here are five reflection questions to help you personally engage with Christ's call for us to live in unity with our fellow Christian brothers and sisters:

1. What does unity in the body of Christ mean to me personally, and how have I experienced it in my own faith journey?
2. Are there any divisions, grudges, or prejudices in my heart that I need to surrender to Jesus to walk in unity with others?
3. How can I intentionally build deeper relationships with believers from different denominations or backgrounds?
4. What practical steps can I take this week to promote unity in my church, community, or family?
5. In what ways does my life reflect the love and unity Jesus prayed for in John 17?