

THURSDAY AGAPE

EVENING PRAYER (VESPERS)

THURSDAY, WEEK 4

Lent

Unity already exists. The Holy Spirit is the Unity of God. Synodal unity and Christian unity are rooted in that and will manifest it to the degree we allow the Spirit to work in us in the Synod. Unity is not consensus, as if it were the end product of negotiation among ourselves. Unity in perceiving, grasping and living the truth is a gift from the One who is Gift, the Spirit. Being aware and tuned in to the Spirit in our hearts and minds as we “do Synod” allows the unity of the divine love and truth to well up in and through us. We can only come together to eternal life in the Spirit. He alone is the Spirit of Truth who is able to prevent us straying and getting lost and divided. This is the same Spirit who keeps the Church indefectible in the faith, and who guarantees infallibility in those matters of faith and morals which affect our salvation. This is why we must discern in the Spirit the voices and opinions of those participating in the Synod. If someone does not speak from the Spirit, the same Spirit who is at work in those listening will know it. At the end of the Synod process, it will be the Pope in union with the Bishops who will exercise their charism of teaching authority who will decide in the Spirit what the Spirit has been saying to the Church throughout the whole process.

2. “All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.”

We have asked much of the Spirit in this prayer: that he be our only guide, that he make his home in our hearts, that he teach us the way and how to walk it, that he prevent us from causing disorder, that he preserve us from ignorance and partiality and that he lead us to find our unity in him. The wonderful thing is that we can ask him all this and so much more because he is omnipresent in space and time, in every here and now, every there and then. He is in every person alive working as best he can to draw them to Christ and to help them flourish in their humanity as God wills. He will be in every person at the Synod Encounter and in the hall, much like at the Upper Room at Pentecost. And, of course, he is not alone. The Persons of the Trinity don't freelance. They are always in continuous communion of life, activity, love and power. The Unity of the Spirit is precisely the Unity of the Father and the Son, so where the Spirit is, so are they. The Synod Encounter, then, will be a work of the Trinity in and among us, seeking to move the Church forward on its earthly pilgrimage, to make its Light shine more clearly and penetratingly into the hearts and minds of all people, seeking to draw them more powerfully to God. Here we see the missionary outreach of the Synod.

Introduction (All stand)

Priest: O God, come to our aid.

People: O Lord, make haste to help us.

Priest: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

People: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Hymn

Now let us all in one accord,
In fellowship with ages past,
Keep vigil with our heavenly Lord
In his temptation and his fast.

The covenant so long revealed
To faithful men in former time,
Christ by his own example sealed:
The Lord of love, in love sublime.

Remember, Lord, though frail we be,
By your own kind hand we were made;
And help us, lest our frailty
Cause your great name to be betrayed.

Hear us, O Trinity sublime,
And undivided Unity:
So let this consecrated time
Bring forth its fruit abundantly.

Psalms and Canticle (All sit)

Psalm 143 (144): 1-8
For victory and peace

“I can do all things with the help of the One who gives me strength”
(Phil 4:13).

Priest: The Lord is my love and my refuge: in him I place my trust.

Women: Blessed be the Lord, my rock,
who trains my arms for battle,
who prepares my hands for war.

Men: He is my love, my fortress;
he is my stronghold, my saviour
my shield, my place of refuge.
He brings peoples under my rule.

Lord, what is man that you care for him,
mortal man, that you keep him in mind;
man, who is merely a breath
whose life fades like a shadow?

Lower your heavens and come down;
touch the mountains; wreath them in smoke.
Flash your lightnings; rout the foe,
shoot your arrows and put them to flight.

Reach down from heaven and save me;
draw me out from the mighty waters,
from the hands of alien foes
whose mouths are filled with lies,
whose hands are raised in perjury.

Priest: Lord, unite bishops, priests and deacons more closely with Christ through the mystery of the eucharist; renew in them each day the grace of ordination.

All: Lord, give life to the people redeemed by Christ.

Priest: Nourish the faithful with the food of Christ’s word; feed them with the bread which is his body.

All: Lord, give life to the people redeemed by Christ.

Priest: Grant that we may respect the dignity of every person, redeemed by the precious blood of your Son; let us never violate his rights or her conscience.

All: Lord, give life to the people redeemed by Christ.

Priest: Save us all from the blind pursuit of wealth; make us sensitive to the needs of others.

All: Lord, give life to the people redeemed by Christ.

Priest: Be merciful to those who have left our world today; give them everlasting happiness.

All: Lord, give life to the people redeemed by Christ.

Our Father

Priest: Lord, be the beginning and end of everything we do and say. Prompt our actions with your grace, and complete them with your all-powerful help. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Priest: The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. *All: Amen.*

Reflections on the Synod Prayer (III)

1. “Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.”

my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.

The Almighty works mar-vels for me.
Ho-ly his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.

He puts forth his arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.
He casts the mighty from their thrones
and rai-ses the lowly.

He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich a-way empty.

He protects Isra-el, his servant,
Remembe-ring his mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his sons for ever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Ho-ly Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and e-ver shall be, world without end.
Amen.

All: If a man will lose himself for my sake, says the Lord, he will find his true self in life eternal.

Prayers and intercessions

Priest: God enlightens us with the grace of the Holy Spirit that our lives may be filled with justice and faith. Let us proclaim his mercy in our evening prayer.

All: Lord, give life to the people redeemed by Christ.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

All: The Lord is my love and my refuge: in him I place my trust.

Psalm 143 (144): 9-15

Priest: Blessed the people whose God is the Lord.

*Men: To you, O God, will I sing a new song;
I will play on the ten-stringed harp
to you who give kings their victory,
who set David your servant free.*

*Women: You set him free from the evil sword;
you rescued him from alien foes
whose mouths were filled with lies,
whose hands were raised in perjury.*

Let our sons then flourish like saplings
grown tall and strong from their youth,
our daughters graceful as columns,
adorned as though for a palace.

Let our barns be filled to overflowing
with crops of every kind;
our sheep increasing by thousands,
myriads of sheep in our fields,
our cattle heavy with young,

no ruined wall, no exile,
no sound of weeping in our streets.
Happy the people with such blessings;

happy the people whose God is the Lord.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

All: Blessed the people whose God is the Lord.

Canticle

Apocalypse 11

The Judgement

Priest: Victory and empire have now been won by our God.

Women: We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
who are and who were,
that you have taken your great power
and begun to reign.

Men: The nations raged,
but your wrath came,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
and those who fear your name,
both small and great.

Now the salvation and the power
and the kingdom of our God
and the authority of his Christ have come,
for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down,
who accuses them day and night before our God.

And they have conquered him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony,
for they loved not their lives even unto death.

Rejoice, then, O heaven,
and you that dwell therein.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

All: Victory and empire have now been won by our God.

Short Reading

James 4:7-8,10

Give in to God: resist the devil, and he will run away from you. The nearer you go to God, the nearer he will come to you. Clean your hands, you sinners, and clear your minds, you waverers. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.

Short Responsory

Priest: I said: 'Lord, have mercy on me.'

All: I said: 'Lord, have mercy on me.'

Priest: 'Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.'

All: I said: 'Lord, have mercy on me.'

Priest: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All: I said: 'Lord, have mercy on me.'

Canticle *(All stand)*

Magnificat

My soul rejoices in the Lord

Priest: If a man will lose himself for my sake, says the Lord, he will find his true self in life eternal.

Women: My soul glori-fies the Lord,