

How many of you this day realize that you walk in glory? I am not speaking of earthly glory which lauds the efforts of humankind; but the glory of heaven that shakes off prison shackles; transforms lives, such as in the Roman jailor and his household from the reading of Acts; a glory that is the Alpha and Omega, lights up the sky, and invites all to the tree of life and eternal waters. Do you truly *know*, deep in your soul, that this glory has been given to you?

In our Gospel reading today, we hear Christ pray to the Father, “The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one...” This glory has been given to *you!*

But let me back up a bit. This prayer we hear today is spoken after the Last Supper and occurs directly before Jesus and his disciples go to the garden of Gethsemane. The lengthy prayer begins with the first verse of John chapter 17, and Jesus tells his Father in heaven that the disciples have received and believed the words that were given to them. Jesus is essentially pleading with God to look after the disciples, who he has sent out into a world filled with tribulation and temptation, and for God to protect them from evil and sanctify them in truth. They (the disciples) are not of this world, but in the world, and so Christ who was sent by the Father, asks for God's provision and protection as He sends the disciples out into the world to proclaim the Good News. It will not always be an easy task and Christ knows this.

It is then, Jesus prays, “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they all may be one.” That means you! This is not some distant prayer lifted up only for the disciples who walked with Christ over 2,000 years ago. He prays on behalf of all believers throughout all ages, including the saints to come. Right now, at this very moment, this prayer is spoken for you.

Jesus goes on by saying that the Father is in Him and He in the Father, and prays that they...again that's us, may be one as He and the Father are one – completely and fully one. This is not for our own personal gain or for our own fame and fortune or that good luck may befall us, but is so that the world in which Christ sends us out into *knows* that God loved the whole world so much, that He sent His only beloved son. We are sent out in *His* glory, so that we may be one – united with the saints across the span of time, in order that all may know God's profound and gracious love in its eternal fullness.

Over and over again in the prayer we hear “that they may be one.” We hear this prayer in its beauty and glory, but do we live those words with our lips and in our lives? That is truly the challenge. How readily we fall into bickering, self-agendas, gaining the upper hand, and setting ourselves above others through a variety of human-made ladders, forgetting this glorious “one-ness” that has been freely given to us.

There is a wonderful illustration that captures the power of “one-ness” written by Dr. Robert McNeish. Dr. McNeish, a science teacher for many years, had been intrigued with observing geese and first wrote the piece, Lessons from the Geese, for a sermon he delivered in his church. You may have heard this before, but it is worth listening to again.

FACT 1: As each goose flaps its wings it creates an "uplift" for the birds that follow. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.

LESSON: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

FACT 2: When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.

LESSON: If we have as much sense as a goose we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others.

FACT 3: When the lead goose tires, it rotates back into formation and another goose flies to the point position.

LESSON: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are interdependent on each other's skills, capabilities, and unique arrangements of gifts, talents, or resources.

FACT 4: The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

LESSON: We need to make sure our honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement, the production is much greater. The power of encouragement (to stand by one's heart, and encourage the heart of others) is the quality of honking we seek.

FACT 5: When a goose gets sick, wounded, or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it to help and protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then, they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock.

LESSON: If we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong.



We do not fly alone...we are united by the power of the Holy Spirit Who leads and guides us; and uplifted by the love of a gracious God; with Christ Who flies with us and the countless saints; and together we soar and point towards the heavens.

That is the glory we walk and soar in! Bask in it. Soak it in. Breathe it in and breathe it out. Let the Spirit move among you. Allow it to infuse into every atom of your being and course through your veins. Can you hear the dance? Listen... "I in them and you in me...so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." By the power of the Holy Spirit, live as one, united by the unbreakable bond of love in Christ Jesus. Take this dance out into your daily lives, your work, your play and your rest - it is

The pulse an aching world yearns for. Walk out in His glory knowing that Christ is in us and we are in him. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. *AMEN.*