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**That They All May Be One (John 17:20–23)**

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In today's world, the idea of oneness is often discussed. A similar ideological movement in India today secretly receives support from political leaders and threatens the existence of minority groups. It promotes the concept of one nation, one language, one culture, one religion, one food, one dress, and one way of life. Supporters of this ideology argue that it simply calls for unity and national oneness. However, this form of unity is not the same as the one Jesus urges us to have among people of faith because what is actually being enforced is not unity but uniformity. Uniformity demands sameness, but the oneness that Jesus prays for demands love. Let us take a moment to reflect on whether Jesus calls for uniformity or true unity, and how communion serves as the vessel for genuine unity and inclusiveness among nations, rather than mere uniformity. The unity expressed here offers an open invitation to the world to join the body of Christ, an invitation that breaks down only the barriers to approach Him, not the obstacles to one's identity.

Jesus did not pray keeping His disciples in mind. Instead, His prayer is that all who come to believe in Him should live in unity. It is a prayer about how we Christians

should coexist, include, and accept those who are different from us. It emphasizes unity through mutual respect and understanding.

And what is His prayer? Not that we become strong or successful, not even that we stay safe — but that “they all may be one.”

Unity for Jesus is essential, not optional. It is central to the Church’s witness. He says, “that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Our unity is a visible sign to the world that we, as Christians, accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord—not by rejecting others, but by giving witness to the world so that they may know Him as the one who died for the redemption of the world. This is seen as an invitation to the world to partake in His body and blood that he shed for our redemption. It is the proclamation of our faith. Today, I would like to reflect on how this unity becomes visible and tangible to us — especially during the celebration of the Eucharist.

**What is this Prayer for unity, and what does it mean to be a Christian as an upholder of unity?**

Let us examine ourselves to see whether unity is evident in a Christian’s lifestyle, beliefs, devotion, relationship with God/Christ, or in being a Witness. Let’s focus on the words in Jesus’ prayer, “that they also may be one in us.” Here, unity does not mean uniformity but rather the inclusion of all, despite their differences; instead, it calls for a witness in our lives, exemplified by the love of Christ and remaining

united with the familial bond in Christ's body. It is modeled after the Trinity—the Father and the Son are distinct but perfectly united in love. In the previous verses of this chapter, we see how Jesus discusses His relationship with God, the Father. This unity is spiritual yet visible so that the world may believe. Jesus' prayer for unity is a prayer for spiritual togetherness, experienced through partaking in the body and blood of Christ. This unity is both God's gift and our calling. The unity of believers is central to Christ's mission. How do we find faith today in this unity? It is not through practicing spiritual individualism, which prioritizes personal salvation over communal salvation. In today's world, religion is often treated as a private matter, occupying private spaces. Our faith is a practice that calls for unity in the world, not by establishing an empire of Christendom but through enabling everyone to experience the sacrifice Jesus made to include all in His Kingdom.

**How does this unity become real in our life together? One of the clearest ways is at the Lord's Table.**

Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." Many grains of wheat become one loaf. Many grapes are pressed into one cup. Many people, diverse in background, become one body in Christ. Every time we share communion, we proclaim not only Christ's

death and resurrection — we declare our oneness in Him. The world finds its oneness in God’s abiding Spirit, found in the sacrificial love of Christ. The sacrificial body of Christ is still alive. It is alive through the command given to us to remember Him in breaking the one bread and sharing the one cup. Irenaeus, one of the early second-century theologians, claims that the “flesh that perishes is the one which lives according to the 'world', not to the 'word.’” Jesus’ command to share the bread and the wine at the table, which spreads worldwide today, makes us not only united in Him but also to cherish being part of His everlasting life, so that we may not lose life by losing that Spirit which possesses us. John’s gospel exhorts us to this communion of the Spirit.

### **Why Participating in Communion Is Seen as a Gift of Grace**

In our tradition, communion is regarded as a means of grace. We, the believers, are encouraged to partake in the Lord’s Supper as frequently as possible.

Why? Because it is a channel through which God strengthens faith, forgives sin, and unites the Church. Communion is not just a memorial but a present encounter with Christ. Therefore, neglecting Communion means neglecting grace itself. And coming to Communion means stepping into Christ’s prayer for unity.

### **How to Live in Unity, which We Celebrate**

But here is the challenge:

It is possible to receive Communion without living in a state of communion.

It is possible to kneel at the same table but still harbor resentment, prejudice, or division in our hearts. Communion calls us to something greater. If we are one loaf, one body, then we must live as one people. That means: reconciling with those from whom we are estranged. Welcome everyone to the table, including the forgotten, for they belong there just as much as we do. Bearing with one another in love, even when we disagree. It is not about enforcing uniformity. It is not about eclipsing differences and diminishing the importance and respect for the ‘other’.

When we fail to live in unity, our witness is weakened. But when we live the unity Christ prayed for, the world begins to see that Jesus is alive in His people.

**Let us now enter into Christ’s Prayer.**

Friends, each time we gather for Holy Communion, we enter into Christ’s prayer in John 17, affirming with our actions, “Yes, Lord, make us one.” Let us cherish His gift of grace. Let’s come often. Let’s come with open hearts. Let’s come prepared to be united as one body in Christ. As we break one bread and share one cup, may God make us one body, united in Christ, for the sake of the world. And as we leave the table, let us go into the world to live out what we have celebrated—the spiritual unity we experience through Jesus’ command to remember Him and invite all to His kingdom. Amen.