

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2024; Sunday before Pentecost. Benefice Holy Communion, Ampleforth.

Today is the last Sunday of Easter before Pentecost and we heard further in our readings today from John in his letter and Gospel. The passage from John 17 reveals a beautiful, inspiring prayer offered by Jesus for his disciples, and for all *“those who will believe in [him]”*

It was interesting on Thursday reflecting about what the Ascension means with the children at St Hilda's and I asked the question, 'what do you think Jesus is doing now that he is seated at the right hand of the Father? Putting his feet up with a cuppa? No, the answer is he is praying for us! Jesus prays for us. Just think about that for a moment. It is such a gift and blessing to be prayed for. I know that I personally appreciate everyone who prays for me, and I consider it a privilege and calling to remember you and others in my prayers, too. Prayer is a remarkable gift, because it opens us up to God's promises, power, and presence and invites God to help us, and those for whom we are praying. Every prayer is heard by God, which means that every time we pray, or are prayed for, something quite wonderful happens. Many times, I have heard people say how much they have benefited from knowing they are being prayed for. They know, they feel carried and supported, a part of the community. Above all, they feel they are connected, in a relationship because of those prayers. A priest friend of mine often used to say when something good happened or a situation was healed or a person suddenly felt better, "Someone has been praying about this!" Prayer isn't just speaking words, it is doing something, which carries much more weight than anything else we do.

So today, we are reminded that Jesus prays for us. What better gift is there? Not only that, but John also heard this

prayer and faithful recorded it, so we actually know what Jesus was praying.

What does He pray for? He prays that his followers are protected.

While Jesus was with his disciples, he could protect them, but now, things are changing and so he prays: “*Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one.*” And the reason he is praying for their protection is important: it is “*so that they may be one.*”, in other words to be in a relationship with one another as Jesus is in relationship with His Father and the Spirit. As One.

It is often said that the devil doesn't care what churches argue about, just as long as they are arguing. The truth is that the evil one wants nothing more than for us not to be one, to be isolated and fearful, slighted, hurt, and distrustful, feeling rejected, condemned, judged, by those who should be our brothers and sisters in loving relationship.

Jesus must be our only way, our truth, and our life; He who loves us, who died for us, and who prays for us, then and now, praying that we be protected from evil. Above all, we must constantly pray that we be one in relationship with Him and one another. Only then will we be so secure in his truth, that we will be able to rescue those around us, who are struggling to find a truth on which to rest, and to build a life of meaning and hope.

Jesus is that truth and he prays that we share it with the world. Let us do so faithfully, to the glory of God. Amen

