

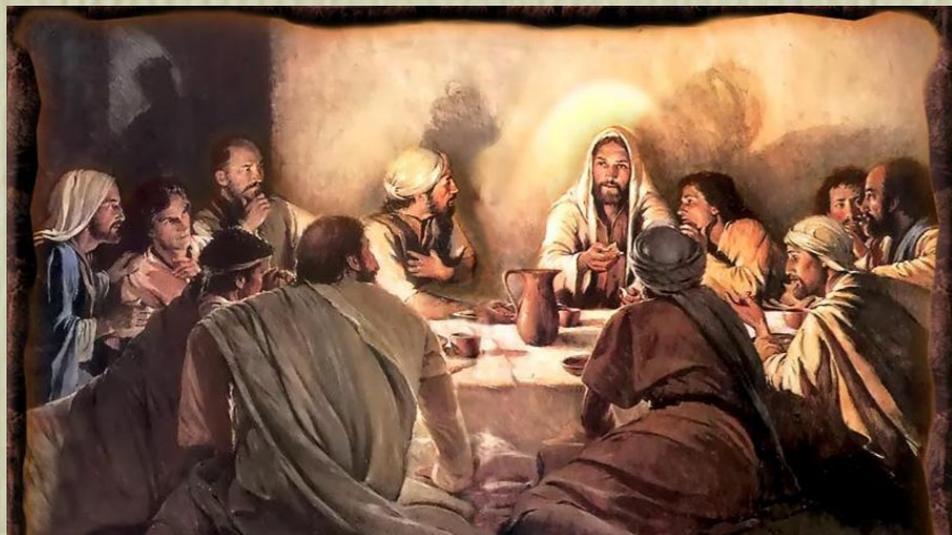
14. ADDITIONS TO THE SUPPER DISCOURSE

John 15:1 - 17:26



Source unknown

A disciple appears to have drawn on the homilies of the Beloved Disciple. We can be confident that he is giving us from his mature reflection privileged insights into the mind and heart of Jesus. As with the supper discourse (13:31 – 14:31), so here, we are meant to imagine Jesus continuing his farewell speech to ‘his own’ at their final supper together. At times we are listening to Jesus speaking from the cross and sometimes from the glory of his risen life.



Source unknown



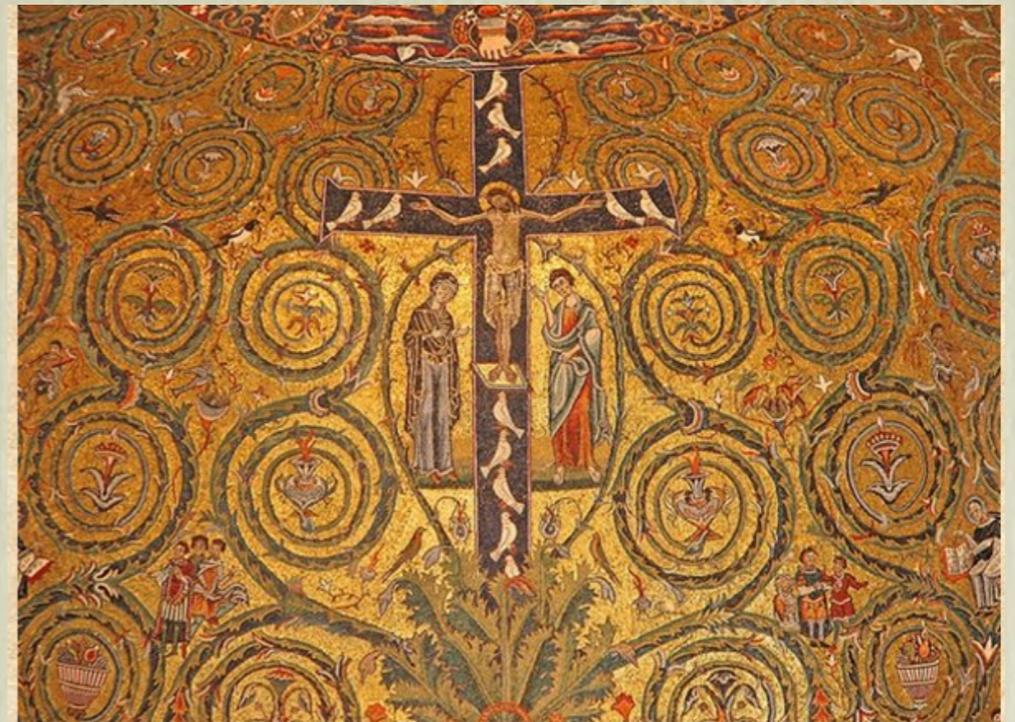
Mary and John at the Foot of the Cross,
Society of Mary Generalate Building,
Rome, Photo Nicole Trahan.



John 15:1-3

I. The vine and the branches

I am (εγώ εἰμι) the true vine; my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been pruned by the word that I have spoken to you.



San Clemente, Rome

The fruit of love causes God's beauty to be radiantly obvious. This fruit comes from the heart of Jesus, God's Son. His love, his Spirit is the sap which fills the branches so long as they remain attached to the vine.

There is pain in the pruning, for, as Jesus has already said about himself: ‘unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit’ (12:24). Jesus’ focus here, however, is not on the pain or on the need to die to self. He is not asking us to do the pruning ourselves, but to cling close to him. The pruning is not to be feared for it is not destructive. It will happen in the wisest way, for it will be done by the delicate hand of our loving ‘vinegrower’, God himself.

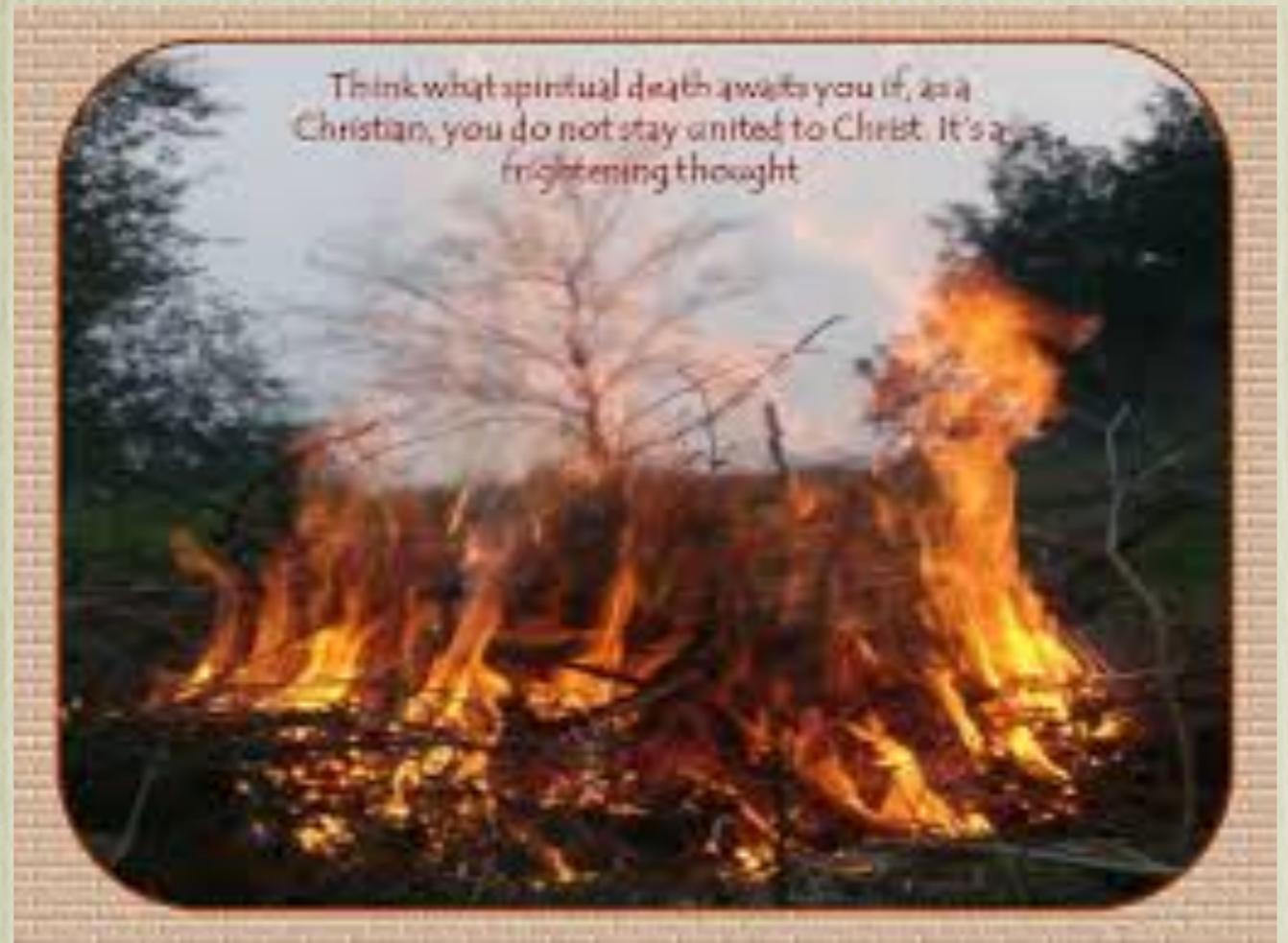
John 15:4-5

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing.

It is not that we do nothing. Whatever we do will not be apart from him. We are being called to let go of our ego. We are being called to be like a 'little child' joyfully receiving from him the love that will radiate out to others and draw them to him and so to the Father. Paul learned this: 'Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God' (2 Corinthians 3:5). 'I can do all things through him who strengthens me' (Philippians 4:13).

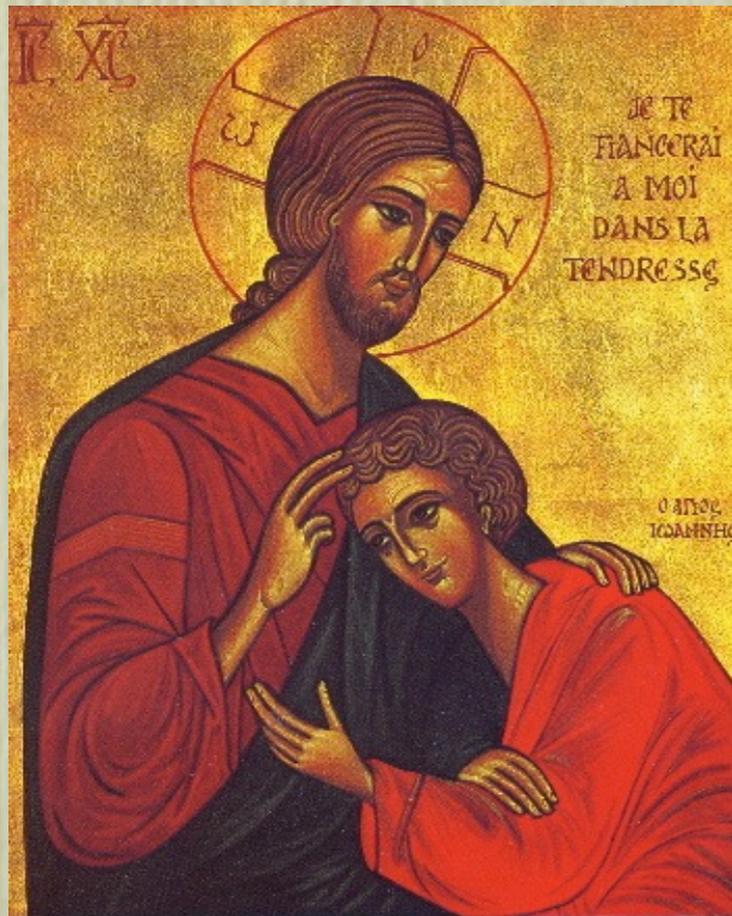
John 15:6

Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.'



John 15:7-9

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.



George Viredaz from an icon of Christ and Saint John Dormition Abbey, Jerusalem. Used with permission.

Jesus has already spoken of his love for us (13:1; 13:34; 14:21). Now he tells us that the love which he has for us has its origin in the love which his Father has for him. It is the human expression of the intimate communion which is the very being of God.

With the Beloved Disciple we are being invited to share Jesus' divinity: to be with Jesus **'in the bosom of the Father'** (1:18).

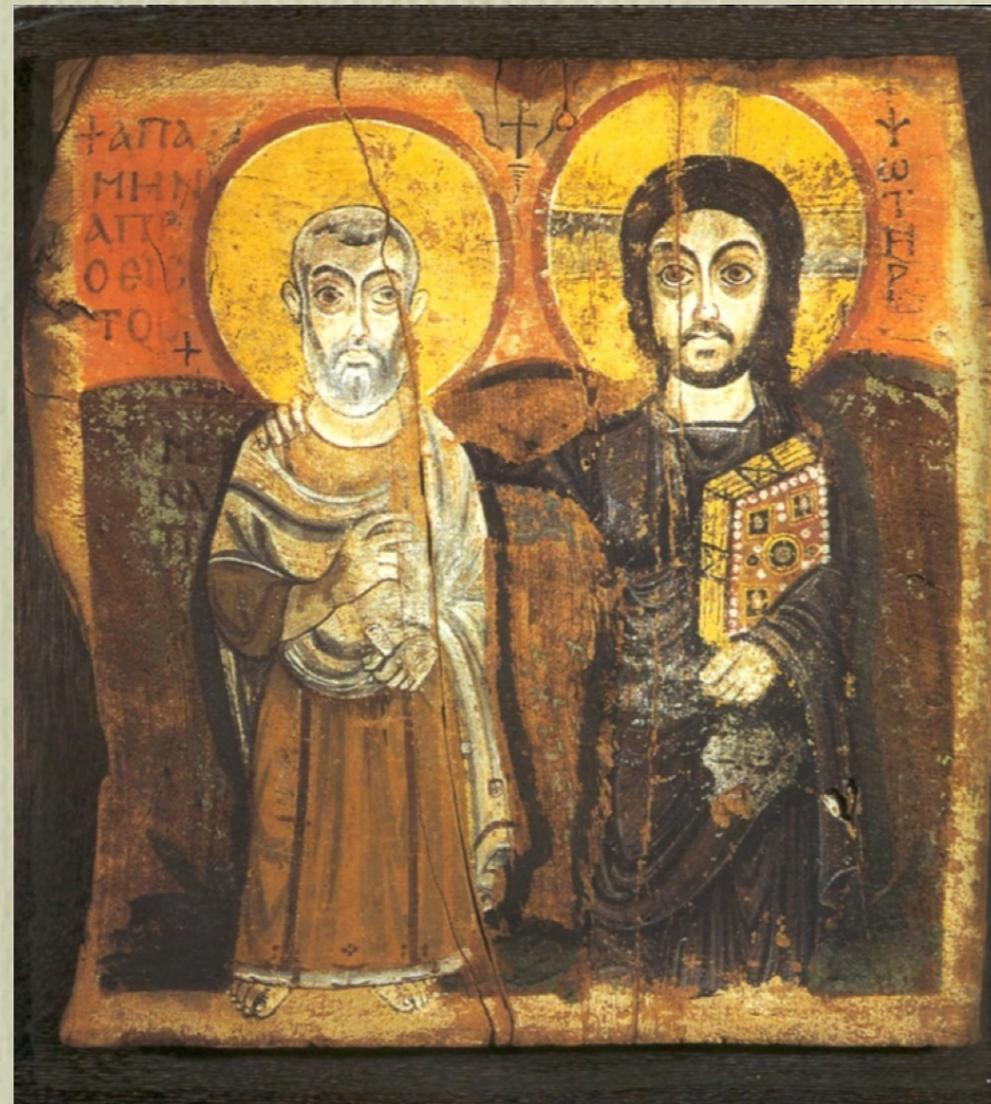
John 15:10-11

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

Once again Jesus insists on the necessary link between love and obedience (see 13:34; 14:15,21-24). The Father continues to hold Jesus in love and Jesus freely and joyfully commits himself to doing whatever his Father asks of him (8:29; 14:31). He encourages us to do the same. It is in doing God's will that we, like Jesus, will find our joy (15:11; see 4:36).

John 15:12-14

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.



Icon of Friendship 8th Cent Coptic Icon
Louvre Museum, Paris.

John 15:15

I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

Pope Gregory the Great makes a play with the Latin and defines a friend (*amicus*) as a guardian of the soul (*animi custos*): ‘It is not without reason therefore that a person who does Jesus’ will in carrying out his commandments is called his friend’ (Moralia 27.8).

John 15:16-17

You did not choose me. I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. This is my command: love one another.

When our prayer arises out of our union with Jesus, we can be sure that our prayer will be heard (see 14:13-14; 15:7).

2. Discipleship & Persecution John 15:18 - 16:4

John 15:18-21

If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world – therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘Servants are not greater than their master’ (13:16; compare Matthew 10:24). If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name (compare Matthew 10:22), because they do not know him who sent me.

1 John 4:5-6

‘They are from the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whoever is not from God does not listen to us.’

John 15:22-25

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. It was to fulfil the word that is written in their law, 'They hated me without cause.' (Psalm 69:4)

John 15:26-27

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.



John 16:1-4

I have said these things to you to keep you from stumbling. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me. But I have said these things to you so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you about them.

While it was Pilate, the Roman prefect, who passed the sentence condemning Jesus to crucifixion, he did so at the instigation and insistence of the Jewish religious authorities.

Paul confesses that he was responsible for persecuting the followers of Jesus (Galatians 1:13-14). He thought that in killing Jesus' disciples he was 'offering worship to God', and so he can say of others like him: 'I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened' (Romans 10:2). The killing of Stephen (Acts 7:58-60) and of James (Acts 12:2-3) witness to the kind of persecution suffered by Jewish Christians at the hands of the Jewish authorities.

3. Reviewing Jesus' Farewell Speech John 16:4-33

While many of the themes from Jesus' farewell speech (13:33 - 14:31) recur here, the perspective is different. A new situation of persecution and the apparent failure of the Gospel to find a welcome in the world has caused the community to re-examine its faith under the guidance of Jesus' Spirit.

John 16:4-7

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

Prior to the coming of his ‘hour’ he is with us, but with all the necessary limitations that are part of the human condition. Once glorified he will be able to be present to us through the Spirit which he (15:26) and the Father (14:16,26) will send. We will know him ‘from the inside’ and experience him moving in our hearts and minds, drawing us into his own communion with the Father.

John 16:8-11

And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong

about sin (ἁμαρτία)

and righteousness (δικαιοσύνη, only time in John)

and judgment (κρίσις):

about sin, because they do not believe in me;

(Jesus was condemned as a sinner!)

about righteousness, (God's righteousness, and so human righteousness)

because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer;

about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

(Jesus is victorious over death)

John 16:12-15

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that the Spirit will take what is mine and declare it to you.

The Spirit will say again to future generations what Jesus has said. The Spirit will declare the true meaning of ‘things that are to come’ by saying again in new circumstances what Jesus has revealed.

Let us pray with the Psalmist: ‘Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long’ (Psalm 25:5). ‘Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path’ (Psalm 143:10).

John 16:16-20

A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me. Then some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying to us, ‘A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’; and ‘because I am going to the Father (see 14:28)’?” They said, “What does he mean by this ‘a little while’? We do not know what he is talking about.” Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, “Are you discussing among yourselves what I meant when I said, ‘A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me?’

Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy.

Resurrection. Pentecost

John 16:21-23

When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish (θλίψις) because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. You have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. On that day you will ask nothing of me.

Jesus is assuring them that his dying will issue in life – for him and for them. He is referring to the faith-experience of communion with him which they will have in the Spirit. Jesus' suffering will issue in joy. Their suffering at his death and the suffering which they experience through persecution will likewise issue in joy as they experience deeper communion with him

John 16:23-28

Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you (see 15:16; compare Mark 11:24). Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete. I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly of the Father. On that day you will ask in my name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves (φιλέω) you, because you have loved (φιλέω) me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father.”

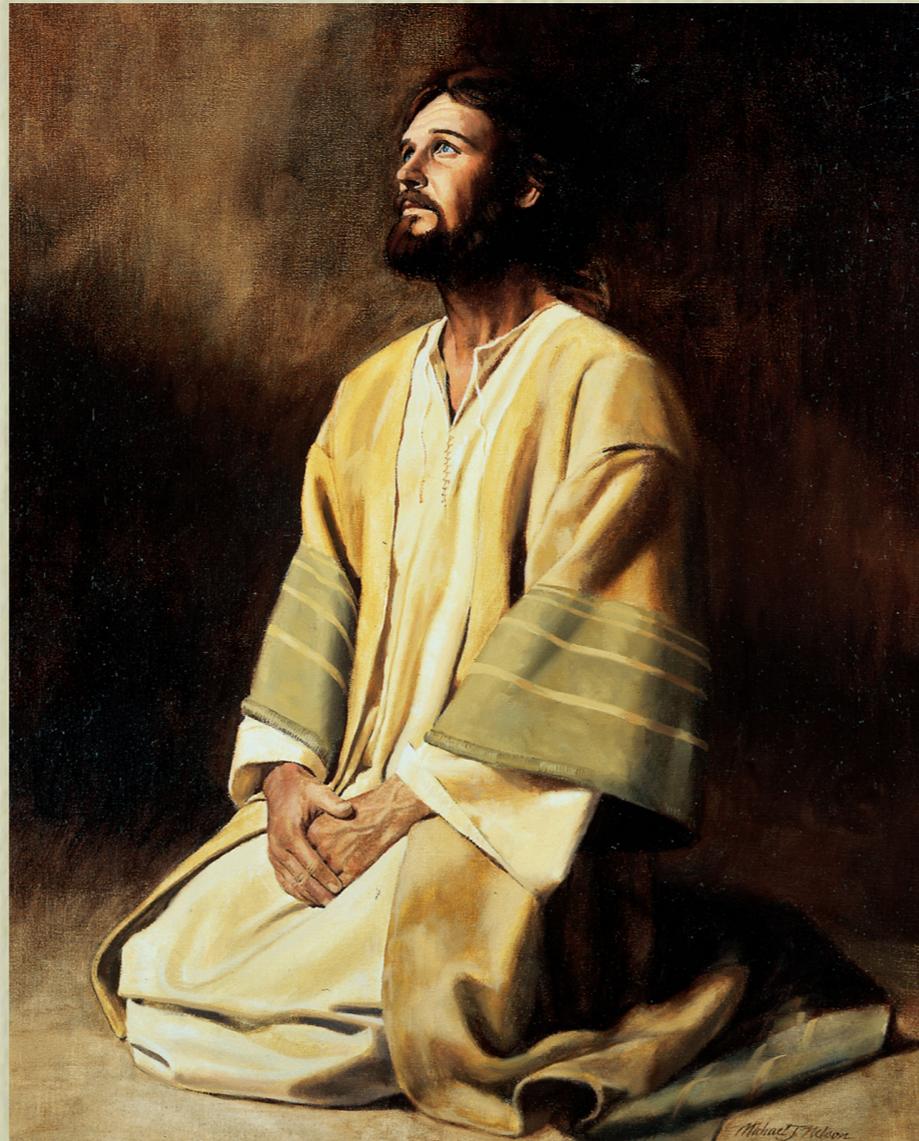
John 16:29-32

His disciples said, “Yes, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure of speech! Now we know that you know all things, and do not need to have anyone question you; by this we believe that you came from God.” Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone.

The disciples are too self-assured. Just as Jesus had to correct Peter (see 13:36-38), so he corrects them. They might think that they understand, but they will soon scatter, leaving Jesus to face his struggle alone. Mark records this same warning given by Jesus as they left the supper room and were on their way to the Mount of Olives: ‘You will all become deserters’ (Mark 14:27).

John 16:32-33

You will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me.



Jesus kneeling in prayer. Michael Jervis Nelson
Used with permission

I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!”

4. Jesus' Prayer John 17:1-26

a: Jesus' prayer for those with him at the supper 17:1-19

John 17:1-2

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come (12:23; 13:1); glorify your Son (reveal our intimate communion) so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

John 17:3 (The narrator)

And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus the Messiah whom you have sent.

John 17:4-5

I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

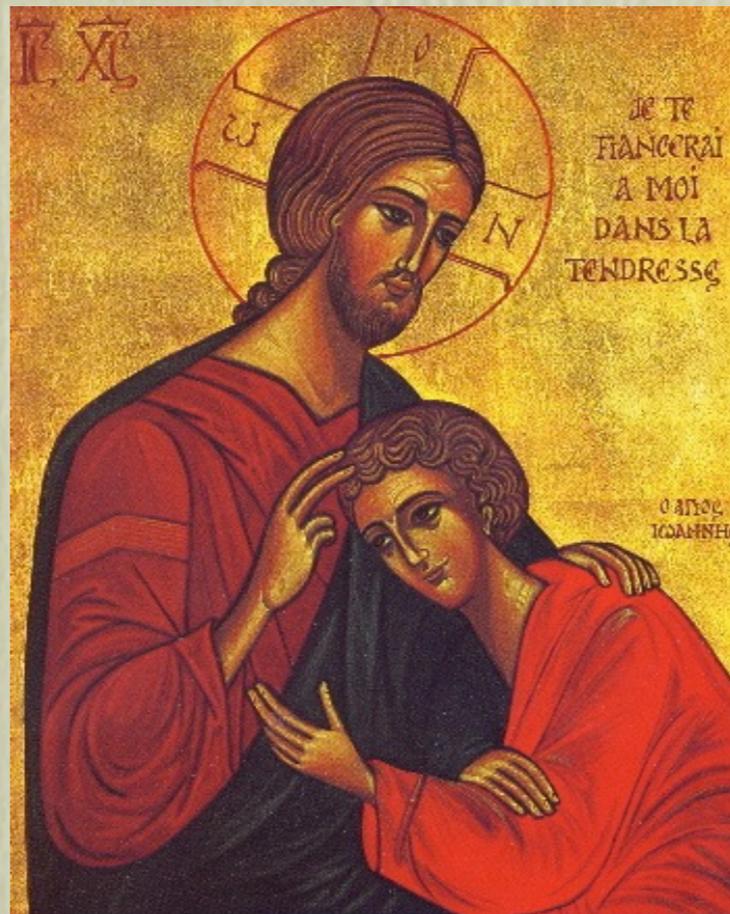
John 17:6-9

I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.

We are listening to Jesus' farewell speech, but we are also listening to him addressing us from the fullness of glory that he enjoys now that 'the hour' is complete.

John 17:10-11

All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.



George Viredaz from an icon of Christ and Saint John
Dormition Abbey, Jerusalem. Used with permission.

John 17:12-17

While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.

But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have **my joy** made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from evil.

They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

John 17:18-19

As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

God, the Father of Jesus, is true (3:33; 8:26), because God always acts according to who God is: God is faithful to his love. It is something of which we can be sure and upon which we can rely.

Jesus reveals this true God because he is the true light (1:9), the true prophet (6:14), the true bread (6:32), the true food and drink (6:55), the true vine (15:1). His word is true (8:40,45,46; 16:7). His Spirit is the Spirit of truth (14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

Jesus, present through his Spirit among his disciples after his death and resurrection, can be relied upon to continue to reveal the real God and to draw people into real communion with God. A true disciple is one who makes God's word his or her home (8:31). Such a person will worship God in truth (4:23; 4:34), will come out into the light (3:21) and find freedom (8:32).

b. Jesus' prayer for future disciples John 17:20-23

'I pray not only for these, but for those also who will believe in me through their word. **May they all be one.** Father, may they be one **in us.** As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe that it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one, as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one, so that the world may realise that it was you sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.

May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us.

The most persuasive sign, the most wonderful gift of the Spirit that will engender faith is that love which has its source not in human need, human longing, or human effort, but in the heart of God. The unity Jesus wants for his disciples is a unity that flows from the real communion of love which he has with his Father in the Spirit. Any untruth that enters into this relationship from the world is the very contamination against which Jesus has been praying.

When Jesus prays that we will be one, it is one with him and one with the Father that is foremost in his mind. The unity we share with each other is a consequence of our unity with him.

Love has no goal beyond itself. Jesus simply wants to draw everyone to be part of the love he shares.

However, he also knows that the more his disciples enter into divine communion, the more we will be in love with each other, and, as he said earlier: 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another'(13:35).

c. Jesus' prayer for all his disciples John 17:24-26

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may always see the glory you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them.'

Jesus will continue to reveal his Father to us and to invite us into his own love response. He will do so, as he has already promised, through the gift of his Spirit (see 14:26; 16:13).

Literary Works Licensed by Copyright Agency.
You must not copy this work without permission.

WARNING

This material has been reproduced and communicated to you by or on behalf of St Mary's Towers Retreat Centre in accordance with section 113P of the Copyright Act 1968 (Act).

The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act.

Any further reproduction or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.

Do not remove this notice.