

THE IN-BETWEEN TIME

(JOHN 17:1-11)



On this Sunday between the feasts of the Ascension and Pentecost, the Church puts before us the final prayer of Jesus from the Gospel according to John.

Jesus is aware that his departure is imminent, as his first words are, "Father, the hour has come". His leaving the disciples will be by way of the cross, but this is the means by which he and the Father will be glorified. For John, all the aspects of the paschal mystery take place at the crucifixion, and the crucial meaning of the resurrection is not that Jesus comes back to life (as Lazarus did), but that his existence is radically transformed and glorified.

Jesus' work of revealing God is nearing its end. He prays for his disciples, that God will be a Father to them and care for them in the midst of a hostile world. He has made known God's name, that is, all that can be known about God: it is this which makes possible the gift of eternal life. He asks that they be kept in the Father's name and so experience the unity that Jesus and the Father enjoy. Jesus' prayer ends with his declaration that he is returning to the Father, which is the meaning of the ascension, but there is still the final act of the paschal (or Easter) mystery to come – the sending of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. ■

LEARN

For John, the Fourth Evangelist, eternal life consists in knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

No one has to believe in any particular apparition of a supernatural figure.

In biblical thought, to know the name of a person is somehow to have access to that person's deepest being: hence the name of God YHWH is never pronounced in the Hebrew Bible.

DO

Look up at the sky; then look at a crowded street; where do you think Jesus is more likely to be found today?



SAY

**Eternal life is this:
to know you, the only
true God, and Jesus
Christ, whom you
have sent**

(John 17:3)

REFLECT

In the Gospel passage, Jesus says that he has made God's name known: that is, he has revealed all we can know about God. The tradition of the Church is the reflecting of the people of God on the word and what it means for the life of Jesus' disciples today. Our understanding of what the word signifies develops: the manner in which it is expressed has to adapt to changing circumstances while preserving the essential teaching; this is what we mean by tradition. In the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, we find that the most frequent references to the Holy Spirit occur in the chapter on tradition.

The same document teaches officially that no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Throughout the history of the Church, there have been groups which have claimed secret or mystical knowledge which is denied to run-of-the-mill Christians. Individuals have alleged that they have been given privileged information through visions or other experiences. The Church always treats such assertions of personal supernatural communications with a high degree of caution, if not suspicion.

No one, and no particular group, has any advantage over anyone else when it comes to knowledge of God. The teaching of Jesus is available to anyone who is open to accepting it: in this way, eternal life is offered to all. It is the Holy Spirit who will lead us into the complete truth. ■