

Seventh Weekend of Easter (RCL/B): Easter 7/Mother's Day  
Psalm 1; John 17:6-19  
May 11-12, 2024  
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Manasquan

"The reveal is going to be in a couple weeks!" When I asked church friends recently how their pregnant daughter-in-law is doing, that was their excited answer. So **what** did they mean? What is going to be revealed?

Yes, **the baby's sex** will be the big revelation. Reveal parties are a pretty recent development in the world of expectant parents. Although some parents are intentionally veering away from decorating the nursery pink for a girl or blue for a boy, I think either pink or blue is still the symbolic color-coding used in reveal cupcakes or confetti showers or whatever other creative way couples telegraph the unborn baby's sex to the world.

Jesus **reveals** some pretty important stuff to His disciples the night before He dies, which is the time frame for today's Gospel. Every year on this 7<sup>th</sup> Weekend of Easter we hear a part of the Last Supper Discourse in St. John's Gospel, in particular the section called "the High Priestly Prayer." It enables us to eavesdrop on an intimate Parent/Child conversation in which Jesus the Son talks to His Father in Heaven, praying that we, His disciples, would become one as He and the Father are One. Jesus intercedes for us, asks the Father to enable and to fortify our unity with other Christians.

Why? Why is Christian unity so important that on the night before He dies Jesus sharply focuses on it?

Because "*By **this** they will know that you are My disciples, **if** you have love for one another.*" (John 13:35) If we can't get along with each other, why would someone on the outside want to hang out with us or learn any more about who we are, what we believe,

why we do what we do? Ultimately, as surely as pink cupcakes herald the arrival of a girl and blue confetti anticipates the birth of a boy, **love of neighbor and unity among**

**Christian denominations signal the Presence of Christ.**

What examples can you think of from here or other places you've lived, worked, played or studied, of Christians joining hands to pray or to work together? An answer to our Lord's prayer that **we be one** as He and the Father are one? For instance:

- Ecumenical food pantry at Manasquan Pres.
- Our Furniture Bank with worker bees from various churches
- MOVE: Manasquan Organization of Volunteer Efforts, birthed by Superstorm Sandy
- Our Bible study series with St. Denis
- Ecumenical Soup & Scripture
- Good Friday and Thanksgiving ecumenical worship
- The planting, weeding and upkeep of the Giving Garden at St. Denis
- Baccalaureate service at Manasquan High School
- The community 9/11 service in Abe Voorhees Plaza (by the Manasquan Post Office)
- Family Promise ministry to temporarily homeless families

A couple weeks ago we heard another part of this Last Supper discourse from St. John's Gospel in which Jesus says:

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)*

Whatever we accomplish together in the Lord's name, for any of God's children in need of food, furniture, shelter, clothing, hope, all of it is the fruit of God's love channeled through us. We are not the divine Source; we are servants of the Most High. Any light we shed is a

reflection of the true Light which has come into the world. We must always remember the **promise**: *“Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit,”* and the **caution**, *“... apart from me you can do nothing.”*

It's Mother's Day weekend, and I'm imagining the vine as an umbilical cord that connects mother and baby, channeling oxygen and nutrition to the unborn child, marvelously enabling it to grow and develop. The divine umbilical cord, routing God's breath, God's love, God's life to us, is Word and Sacrament, “the means of grace.” When we intentionally reach out for those gifts, freely given, always available, the centerpieces of our Life Together, we flourish. When we separate ourselves from the Word of the God, the Holy Supper, the family of faith, we spiritually starve, as surely as if a baby stopped nursing.

So don't be a stranger this summer!! Our Savior has asked our heavenly Parent that we may be one as they are one. Our unity within this congregation and beyond into our Ministerium is a sign to the world of the risen presence and power of Christ. The Body of Christ needs you to do its healing work in the world. Find your ministry niche, settle into your happy place of church volunteering, and remember the promise **and** the caution:

*“Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.”*

Amen.

Pastor Mary Virginia Farnham