



A THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE PRIESTLY PRAYER OF JESUS

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BRIAN R. SATTLER
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Introduction

The Word of God may touch the innermost heart of a person so profoundly that it draws the soul to oneness with God forever. No one is excluded from the love of God. It is only a choice that a person makes that will separate him/her from God. However, God never leaves the soul. Rather, it is only the soul who imagines that God is gone. Light or darkness is a choice. The Gospel of John teaches us that all things came to be through Jesus, who is the light, the Son of God, who reveals God to humanity. Jesus gives humanity “the power to become children of God” (John 1:12) by responding to the divine touches from God, which are the seminal actions responsible for the birth of a child of God. By receiving these seeds from the Word of God, his children are destined to stand at the foot of the cross with the mother of God, ready to take their places beside our Lord on the cross.

Once resurrected by the Holy Spirit of God, the child of God can remain or leave. The child of God is free to enjoy the fruits of communion with our Lord or free to struggle as he/she wills. Communion is the beauty of oneness with God. He allows the soul to enter into an intimate relationship with him while remaining free, a unique individual soul. Consequently, a great paradox arises. The soul, somehow united with God, is still exposed and open to sin. How can this be? Simply put, Jesus prays that those who believe in him through the word the apostles proclaim will be one with him just as he is one with the Father (John 17:20-21).

The purpose of the Gospel is “so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). The life that John is speaking of is a life of oneness with God, both on an

intimate personal level and as a collective whole. My goal is to reveal to the reader, through a theological investigation into the Priestly Prayer of Jesus, John 17:20-26, the diverse levels of oneness with God as presented through some of the events, characters, and teachings of Jesus within the Gospel of John and in the hearts of some believers through the ages.

In order to accomplish this goal, I will first offer an exegetical interpretation of the Prayer of Jesus, specifically, John 17:20-26. I will expose form, literary, and canonical investigations into the text that will reveal what oneness with God looks like through the eyes of the author and various commentators, saints, and popes over time. This will give the reader an understanding of what unity with God has meant over the last two thousand years. Next, I will examine the doctoral thesis of Paul Simick entitled “That They May All Be One—Jesus’ Prayer of Unity According to John 17:20-26.” Simick’s work closely examines the meaning of unity with God, especially through faith in the Priestly Prayer of Jesus. Finally, I will offer, based on the Priestly Prayer of Jesus in the Gospel of John, what oneness with God means for believers today.

The Prayer of Jesus in John 17:20-26 eternally unites humanity with God

The theme of prayer is relevant throughout the Gospel narratives. Jesus teaches his disciples to pray. He prays with his disciples, for his disciples, for his persecutors, and for himself. Jesus prays in community and in solitude. Jesus directs his prayers to the Father, setting an example for his disciples to follow. In the Gospel of John, when Jesus is about to depart and enter into his passion and glory, he prays for his disciples (John 17:9-19). Then, he does something that is unique to all the Gospel narratives. He prays for

those who will believe in him through his disciples' word (John 17:20). The Priestly Prayer is captivating. Jesus is making an eternal prayer as he says,

I pray not only for them [the disciples], but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me and that you loved them even as you loved me. Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they may also be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them. (John 17:20-26)

The Prayer of Jesus is an invitation for the believer to live in oneness with God. How can this be? If Jesus is asking the Father, then the Father will answer. It would be comforting to know what Jesus means in his prayer. In order to answer these questions, an examination of this prayer using various exegetical criticisms is in order. Form criticism exposes a glimpse of the world behind the text. In addition, form criticism seeks to get into the mind of the author or redactor and tries to answer why the author compiled the text the way he/she did. Ultimately, form criticism is a “genre analysis” that stresses

the “importance of seeing a text in relation to the larger literary composition in which it is located” (Hayes and Holladay 104). Similarly, literary criticism opens up the text and encompasses most “questions pertaining to the composition of the text including authorship, historical setting, purposes for writing, and the overall structure, or form that gives shape to the writing” (Hayes and Holladay 90). Canonical criticism examines the scriptures as a whole within a tradition. Succinctly, believers read scriptures expecting “to hear the voice of God directly or indirectly.” In addition, “when believers read their own Scriptures, they already accept the vision of faith found in the text. With each new reading they interpret the sacred text in light of their prior faith” (Hayes and Holladay 153). Ultimately, in the case of the canonical investigation into the Priestly Prayer of Jesus in this essay, a Roman Catholic preunderstanding is illustrated.

Form Criticism exposes the masterpiece of the Prayer of Jesus

The first criticism employed in this study is form criticism, e.g., genre evaluation, life setting, and meaning, without losing interest in the larger literary work. It is obvious that the Priestly Prayer of Jesus is within a Gospel narrative. However, the Gospel of John is broken down into the “Book of Signs,” chapters 1-12, the “Book of Glory,” chapters 13-21, and the “Epilogue,” which is Jesus’ appearance in Galilee (Brown, *Epistles* 5). Moreover, scholars have broken the gospel of John down into further sub-genres. Sub-genres are pericopes that are self-contained stories or teachings. In other words, they have a beginning, middle, and end that articulate a particular meaning or principle. The Prayer of Jesus is placed in the context of what Raymond Brown calls a “last discourse,” which was not always united to the Gospel of John (*John XIII-XXI* 542). The prayer is located in the “Book of Glory,” and Jesus and the disciples were previously

sharing a meal (John 13:26). In fact, Brown says, “some [scholars] proposed that Jesus really did leave the supper room after what he said in [John] XVI 30-31 and the rest of the Discourse was spoken on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane on the other side of the Kidron” (*John XIII-XXI* 583).

If the prayer of Jesus was not always united to the Gospel, where did it come from?

Brown thinks that the evangelist who composed the Gospel of John collected various sayings of Jesus to form the Gospel, just as Luke and Mark did from the “ministry [of Jesus] proper” (*John XIII-XXI* 582). In other words, the evangelist put the Gospel of John together well after the death of Jesus. He uses the materials of the oral and written tradition to construct the narrative. Furthermore, Brown proposes a final redactor, who takes the “genuinely Johannine material, some of it ancient, some stemming from the evangelist himself” and composes the narrative (*John XIII-XXI* 584). In other words, the final author is using all his resources to build the narrative. In fact, Brown is enthralled with the composition of the Gospel narrative as a whole, thus, he writes,

The last supper discourse is best understood when it is the subject of prayerful meditation and the scientific analysis does not really do justice to this work of genius. Just as a great painting loses its beauty when the individual parts are studied under a microscope, so the necessary discussion of the composition of the Last Discourse may tend to mar the over-all realization that one is dealing with a masterpiece. (*John XIII-XXI* 582)

If a genius is constructing the Gospel of John, this should explain the location and meaning of the prayer within the Gospel.

Brown divides the last discourse into three divisions. The Prayer is the last division. Brown writes that in “the great sacerdotal prayer in XVII, we find a tightly knit whole. If material of diverse origins has gone into XVII, that material has been welded together more smoothly than any other division or sub-division of the discourse” (*John XIII-XXI* 587). Brown thinks it is a “perfect climax,” which may parallel the Synoptic Gospels’ prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane before his arrest (*John XIII-XXI* 587). However, the meaning of the prayer is radically different from those in the Synoptics. What is influencing the author?

The life setting in which the prayer was captured by the evangelist and placed in the Gospel of John by the final redactor may shed some insight into the meaning of the Prayer. In his commentary, *The Gospel of John*, Francis J. Moloney writes, “The Gospel of John is marked by conflict between Jesus and ‘the Jews’ that indicate the period when hostility between two emerging sects of Christianity and post-70 rabbinic Judaism was leading to a breakdown in relations” (2). Furthermore, Moloney condenses the life setting in which the text was written into these words: “The Gospel of John in its final shape was written in a way that is rooted in the Jewish origins of the Christian Church yet open to the wider world, in a way that is somewhat foreign to the synoptic gospels” (3). In fact, most scholars agree that the Gospel of John was written somewhere around the year 100 CE in Ephesus. Moloney describes this *Sitz im Leben* as, “a place where Judaism, early Christianity, the complex religions of the Hellenistic and Greek world, and incipient Gnosticism rubbed shoulders-often painfully” (5). In short, John is a genius. He is an

early practicing Christian who lived in a hostile environment, weaving the Prayer of Jesus into the Book of Glory about seventy years after the prayer originated from material gathered by the original evangelist and from other sources. Why did he do this?

The Priestly Prayer clearly functions as a fulfillment/conclusion in the mind of the genius who is constructing the narrative as a whole. The author is someone who believes because of the word that Jesus had spoken to his disciples. He is a disciple of Jesus, which is clearly demonstrated by his construction of the Gospel. Andrew T. Lincoln, in his book, *The Gospel According to Saint John* writes, “The dominant scholarly view is that the Beloved Disciple was a founding figure and teacher in a particular group of Christians, his identity is irrevocable and he may or may not have been a minor follower of Jesus during his Jerusalem ministry” (22). The beloved disciple fits the description of the redactor. “After the tradition came from the beloved disciple and after the body of the Gospel was written by the evangelist (sometime after the mid-80’s), further editorial work seems to have been done” (Brown, *Epistles* 11). Therefore, the redactor is living in the Christian community of the evangelist. Moreover, he is living in the Prayer of Jesus as others in the future may live in the prayer. Brown says the Priestly Prayer crosses the “threshold of eternity” (*Epistles* 84). What does that mean? How does this happen? To understand this further, more employment of some exegetical criticisms of the Prayer of Jesus are necessary.

Literary Criticism exposes the efficacious power of the Word of God in the Prayer of Jesus

Literary criticism, which is not being ignored completely when examining the form, has a wide range of sub-criticisms under its canopy. Because Jesus is the Word of God and he is speaking, it may be beneficial to investigate the rhetorical proofs of the discourse. However, first, it is important to examine closely what Jesus is saying from a literary point of view that flushes out the purpose or the function of the text.

In verses twenty and twenty-one, Jesus is addressing the Father, praying for those who will believe in him through the words of the apostles; Jesus is doing this in order that the believers may be one as the Father and Jesus are one (John 17:20-21). What is the “word” of the apostles, and what does it mean to be one as the Father and Jesus are one?

First, the apostles did not videotape their encounter with Jesus. In addition, there are different gospel accounts of Jesus, all of which have unique characteristics. Moreover, the writer of John’s Gospel testifies to the things that he has seen. Furthermore, he says there are also many other things that Jesus did. In fact, if he were to write them down, the entire world could not hold all of the words (John 21:24-25).

Second, Jesus uses word in the singular. Is Jesus predicting a unified canon of scripture, compiled by a community of believers who are from many different occupations but who have one traditional heart with their source in Jesus? Possibly, but, how does that explain the profitable action of the Holy Spirit, working through the apostles before any scriptures were written, before any tradition was established, and in so many languages? Where does this alluring “word” come from? Perhaps an examination of what it means to be one as the Father and Jesus are one is in order.

Benedict XVI, in his book, *Introduction to Christianity*, says that God is one when he is seen absolutely, and there is “no plurality of divine principles” (182). However, the pope points out that God converses with himself in Genesis 1: 26 and Psalm 110. The divine conversation can be seen as an “element of relationship” within God (182). Moreover, the Gospel of John describes Jesus testifying that “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30), that “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), and that “The Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing” (John 5:19). Therefore, the one God, is, as Ratzinger quotes Augustine, “not called Father with reference to himself but only in relation to the son; seen by himself he is simply God,” who, as Ratzinger puts it, is “purely a concept of relationship” (qtd. in 183). In other words, there is only one God, but he is a relational God who is communicating as Father and Son and inviting believers into the relationship. When Jesus prays for those who believe in him to be one with him and the Father, he is saying that those who believe will live in relationship with God. How can this be, since believers are not God?

Jesus is revealing to the hearers and readers of his word how this is going to take place. Jesus prays that those who believe in the word may know that the Father has sent him (John 17:20). Then the dialogue shifts and Jesus, who has been petitioning the Father, tells the Father that he has given (δεδωκα) them, the apostles and those who believe because they hear the word, the glory that the Father has given him, so that they may be brought to perfection as one (John 17:22). Jesus is implying that he is already giving (δεδωκα) glory to future believers. As Raymond Brown says, “Both these verbs are in the perfect tense, not the aorist, which means they have a continuing action. Jesus continues to possess the glory given to him by the Father, and the disciples continue to

possess the glory given them by Jesus” (*XIII-XXI 771*). Brown makes no mention of the glory extending to those who believe because of the apostle’s word. However, Brown, based on verse one of the prayer, thinks that this continuous action will begin at the exaltation of Jesus (*XIII-XXI 771*). Nevertheless, the fact that Jesus is continuously receiving and giving the glory that the Father has given him, not only to the apostles, but also to future generations who believe, cannot be ignored. Moreover, the apostles eventually die, but the glory continues to be given in perfect oneness because, as Jesus says, it he who is giving the glory in order that “the world may know that the Father has sent” Jesus, and that the Father has loved those to whom he has given the glory, just like the Father loves Jesus (John 17: 23). This implies that this glory is going to be visible for eternity. How is God’s glory seen?

The divine relationship that exists between the Father and Son cannot end. In other words, the glory given to the Son by the Father, who is giving it to the apostles and to those who believe in their word, should be able to be seen forever and should be able to be seen from the beginning. The Holy Spirit has to be the answer to the divine transfer. Therefore, an awareness of the Holy Spirit is in order as the examination of the Prayer of Jesus continues.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was on the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:1-2 KJV). The Spirit is clearly present in the action of creation. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is responsible for the birth of Jesus. “The angel said to her [the Blessed Virgin Mary], the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy;

he will be called the son of God” (Luke 1:35). Ultimately, Jesus promises his disciples the Holy Spirit, saying, “I will not leave you orphaned...the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you” (John 14:15-26). Then, Jesus delivers his promise after his resurrection saying, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he said this, he breathed on them and said to them: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:21-22).

Scholars argue about the exact time when the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples. However, every believer agrees that believers do in fact receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is the Holy Spirit who unites believers into the Godhead and makes the glory of God visible through the believers. As noted, the action of the Holy Spirit is visible before the exaltation or Pentecost in works but also in characters. Elizabeth (Luke 1:41), Zechariah (Luke 1:67), and Simeon (Luke 2:25), to name a few, are all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they make the Holy Spirit visible through their belief in God. On a post-Pentecostal level, Peter clearly makes the glory of God visible when he addresses the first converts, who each hear him in their own language in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Again, when Peter heals the crippled beggar in the third chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, God’s glory is made visible. Even when confronted by the Jewish authorities and imprisoned, Peter and John, filled with the Holy Spirit, fearlessly proclaim the good news. Stephen’s martyrdom, Saul’s conversion, and most evidently, the proclamation of the Word of God revealed through the breaking of the bread are all visible signs of God’s glory to the world. Peter, sums it up best when he exclaims, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing from these people who have

received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” (Acts 10:47) It is evident that the Holy Spirit is with these characters and that the characters are making the glory of God visible to the surrounding world through words, actions, and the breaking of the bread, but is this the oneness that Jesus is praying for, or is there another level? How did Peter nourish this love? In order to find the answer, a further examination of the Prayer of Jesus is helpful.

Canonical Criticism reveals that the Prayer of Jesus has united generations of believers though the ages

In the context of the whole Bible, most Catholics believe Peter was the head of the early Church. Today he would be called pope. Apostolic succession hands on the scriptural and traditional teachings of the Catholic Church. On September 21, 1993 then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, in his preface to the *Document on the Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* quoted, “borrowing a phrase from Leo XIII (*Dei Verbum* 24)” that “The study of the Bible is, as it were, the soul of theology” (244). After reading the document’s efforts “to indicate paths most appropriate for arriving at an interpretation of the Bible,” employment of the canonical approach to the Prayer of Jesus seems profitable. After all, not only Peter and the early church made the glory of God visible, but also many saints, popes, and other Christians throughout the entire history of the church have made the glory of God visible. Therefore, through the eyes of the believing community a canonical examination of the Prayer of Jesus will reveal an underlying theme.

In his book, *John 17: As We Are One*, Titus Cranny reflects on the Prayer of Jesus as a “prayer for all believers” (23). He writes,

The gospel never forgets its readers, those who have believed in Christ on the word of His disciples. Vital contact with future generations and subsequent generations will not be lost for Jesus will dwell in them. The indwelling of Christ, the Christians' earthly share in eternal life, provides the great bond of union connecting Christians of all time with the Father. Jesus' love for them is the same as His love for His immediate disciples: a love patterned on the eternal love of the Father for the Son. So perfect is this love that it will compel the world to recognize it. And they too shall have a share in the eternal glory of the Son... The prayer passes on to generations to come, to all believers whose faith is based on apostolic teaching. (23)

This becomes evident through the lives of many saints. Cranny explores the lives of several saints and exposes their connection to the Prayer of Jesus. Cranny explains, "St. Cyril sees the effect of the Holy Eucharist—a unity which will be a proof to the world that God is here" (24). Jesus prayed that God would be visible. Cranny adds that St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas see the fundamental glory of God in the divine filiation of men (24). He writes, "Adoptive sonship includes everything else and especially that unity like to the union of the Father and Son, which is the central petition of this prayer" (Cranny 23). Again, "St. Cyril and St. Hilary and many commentators after them have stressed that it is through the Eucharist that this prayer of Jesus is realized" (Cranny 24). From Pentecost, oral tradition and eventually scripture give a record of the unifying movement of the Holy Spirit, which affected later believers so much that they underwent persecution and death for celebrating Eucharist.

From a different perspective, St. Hilary of Poitiers (300-368) asked, “Is Christ in us today by the reality of his nature or by a mere harmony of will? If the Word was truly made flesh, and if we truly partake of the Word made flesh ...how could anyone think that He does not remain with us in His nature” (qtd. in Cranny 42). St. Hilary adds, “[Jesus] joins the nature of His flesh to the nature of His eternal divinity. And thus we are all one, because the Father is in Christ and Christ is in us” (qtd. in Cranny 42). A spiritual unity with God has survived within the believing community even when it was confronted by radical Gnostic beliefs, which were eventually discarded by the faithful. In other words, Christians believed that creation was good, not evil. Christians believed that humanity living in right relationship with God and creation was holy.

In a similar way, Cranny exposes the thoughts of St. Cyril of Alexandria (380-444). He quotes St. Cyril, “No one can attain union with God except by participation in the Holy Spirit who implants in us the sanctity proper to His own person and forms us anew to His own life” (26). From this point, St. Cyril explains that union with God is first morally based, and then it moves into mutual love and becomes relational (Cranny 36). Then, believers are joined “hyperphysically to one another and all of us to God” (Cranny 37). Because Jesus became man, suffered, died, and rose from the dead, St. Cyril believes that Jesus enables “man to share and participate in the divine nature [because], the fellowship and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit has passed to us beginning with Christ who was a man like us...[and] true God” (Cranny 37). As the early church expanded, believers were trying to articulate what it meant to be one with God.

St. Augustine (354-430), when commenting on the prayer of Jesus, writes, “Through this faith the world is reconciled to God since it believes in Christ who was

sent by God” (qtd. in Cranny 46). Augustine, whose faith was unrivaled, believed that if Jesus prayed for those who heard the word the disciples proclaimed that they would be one with God, then those who believe in the word are one with God. Cranny writes that Augustine “makes much of the idea of man’s union with Christ” (46). In fact, “No doctor of the Church has written more strikingly of the union of Christ and His members. For him the words of Jesus ‘they are two in one flesh’ apply not only to marriage but to Christ and those in whom he dwells” (Cranny 46). In addition, for Augustine, the Eucharist is that with which Christ “willed that we should belong to Him...He is one and we are one in Him” (Cranny 47). Augustine concludes, “Thus our Lord’s prayer for unity is not only a perfect prayer from the Son of God, but a lesson for all His followers through all the centuries. Unity in Christ is the desire of the Father for all men” (qtd. in Cranny 48). Both spiritual and communal union with God in the Eucharist are paramount to Augustine’s beliefs.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) believes that perfection leads to unity with God and with fellow men (Cranny 48). He writes, “Blessed is the soul which has laid aside all its own... casting off every action of memory... [Stripping] itself of all imagination... [feeling] a certain glow of calm love, or the action of the Holy Spirit” (qtd. in Cranny 48). Then he comments on the words from Jesus, “I will that as I and you are one, so they may also be one,” saying, “This is the end, this is the consummation, this is perfection, this is peace, this is joy in the Holy Spirit, this is a slice of heaven” (qtd. in Cranny 49). For St. Bernard, the monastic life under the rule of St. Benedict fostered both an interior oneness with God and oneness of community in prayer at the Eucharistic celebration.

St. Bonaventure (1221-1274), commenting on the Prayer of Jesus writes, that “Charity, and precisely charity, is the root, the form, and the end of all other virtues as that which unites all to the supreme end that binds all things together in due order [and it] will reach its consummation in eternal glory, in order that Christ’s prayer might be fulfilled” (qtd. in Cranny 52). For St. Bonaventure, to love God and neighbor is to be one with God.

Clearly, the saints all have their own unique approaches to interpreting the Prayer of Jesus; however, they are more similar than different, especially when you consider the Holy Eucharist and how it draws humanity into oneness. Believers, nourished by the Eucharistic meal and a life of prayer, are ready to meet the world.

In his encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*, That We May Be One, Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) writes,

Jesus himself, at the hour of his passion, prayed “that they may be one” (John 17:21). This unity, which the Lord has bestowed on his Church and in which he wishes to embrace all people, is not something added on, but it stands at the very heart of Christ’s mission. Nor is it some secondary attribute of the community of disciples. Rather, it belongs to the very essence of this community. God wills the Church, because he wills unity, and unity is an expression of the whole depth of his agape... Christ’s words “that they may be one” are thus his prayer to the Father that the Father’s plan may be fully accomplished, in such a way that everyone can see...to believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the church; to desire the Church means to desire the communion of

grace which corresponds to the Father's plan from all eternity. Such is the meaning of Christ's prayer: "*Ut Unum Sint.*" (9)

John Paul II goes on to express his ecclesial vision for unity while he reinforces the Church's ecumenical commitment to all God's people. In short, John Paul's vision for a world united in Christ is the overarching plan of the heavenly Father, which is emphasized in the Prayer of Jesus.

In his "Address at the Ecumenical Prayer Service," Pope Benedict XVI says, "Faced with these difficulties [polarization of globalization], we must recall that the unity of the Church flows from the perfect oneness of the Trinitarian God. In John's Gospel, we are told that Jesus prayed to his Father that the disciples might be one, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:21) (par. 7). Pope Benedict XVI goes on to proclaim that "this passage reflects the unwavering conviction of the early Christian community that its unity was both caused by, and is reflective of, the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (par. 7). The pope believes that the "internal cohesion of believers was based on the sound integrity of their doctrinal confession" (par. 7). Finally, the pope concludes by saying: "Like early Christians, we have a responsibility to give transparent witness to the 'reasons for hope,' so that the eyes of all men and women of goodwill may be open to see that God has shown believers his face" (par. 9). From this, the pope determines, through the words of commentator Father Paul Watson, "we will achieve the 'oneness of hope, oneness of faith, and oneness of love' that alone will convince the world that Jesus Christ is the one sent by the Father for the salvation of all" (par. 13).

Clearly, canonical criticism of the Prayer of Jesus within a Roman Catholic pre-understanding affirms that the unity of all believers in Jesus is the will of the Father. How does this unity of believers begin?

The Incarnation Reveals Unity Described in the Prayer of Jesus

The event of the Incarnation as depicted in the Gospel of John mysteriously demonstrates both unity in the Godhead and the unity between God and humanity. The Gospel writer, without any reference to an infancy narrative, proclaims:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

(John.1:1-5)

The first hearers and readers identify this song with God the Creator of the universe, the most powerful God, who alone is responsible for the creation and existence of the universe and all life that dwells in it. Immediately, the hearers, first readers, and believers today think of the creation narratives in Genesis. John is teaching believers that the Word is one with almighty God.

Paul Simick, in his doctoral thesis entitled, “That They May All Be One—Jesus’ Prayer of Unity According to John 17:20-26,” believes that the Prayer of Jesus “In the first usage, where the mutual unity of the Father and the Son is referred to, [is an] absolute affirmation [that the] Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father” (12). The prologue sets up the Prayer, and the Prayer affirms the prologue. Both the event of the

Incarnation through the Prologue, “which contains the theme of unity between Jesus and the believers” (Simick 30), and the confirmation of the Prayer in John 17, set up “two aspects of unity motif in John” (Simick 13). To understand this distinction Simick writes,

From our analysis therefore, we are inclined to conclude that unity in John means the solidarity of two parties in one action or function as we see in the relationship between the Father and the Son. The Son only does what he has seen from the Father. It is therefore, not a unity in essence but a unity in function, though the prologue goes in the direction of unity of essence (Jn 1, 1). In Jn 17, 21, we read that the central thrust of the Jesus prayer for the believers is that $\omega\sigma\tau\nu\ \epsilon\omega$ (that they may be “one”) and it is a unity that is to be a reflection of the solidarity between the Father and the Son. The unity of believers, therefore ...grows from a dynamic confessional solidarity with the salvific mission of the Son of God. (13)

Therefore, the whole testimony of the Gospel of John reflects the theme of relationship and unity within the overall mission of salvation revealed by Jesus.

The first part of the prologue glorifies a living creator God, and this may inspire a believer to wonder at the immense miracle of the creation of the universe and may turn his heart to praise this God. However, the Gospel writer goes further by having John the Baptist testify that “The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s own Son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14-15). The Gospel writer clearly indicates that “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ [and that] no one has ever seen God. The only Son of God, who is at the Father’s side, has revealed him” (John 1:17b-18). Therefore, John the Baptist is testifying that Jesus, who

is one with God, has come to humanity in the flesh to reveal who God is. From this testimony, the same hearts who are contemplating the glory of God's creation move to another level of reality when they contemplate God living among humanity in the flesh of Jesus Christ, who gives believers power to become children of God (John 1:12). For the Johannine community and for future believers, Jesus is the Word (singular) that is to be believed. In addition, Jesus' words and teachings that John is proclaiming in his Gospel are to be "dynamically confessed" and lived in relationship with God. Jesus is one with God, and all existence comes through Jesus. In other words, Jesus is God revealing God. Does John the Baptist believe his own testimony? Matthew's Gospel has John the Baptist questioning the validity of Jesus as the Messiah (Matthew 11:3); however, John's Gospel leaves little room for doubt.

The Prayer of Jesus is radiated through the testimony of John the Baptist

John the Baptist was sent from God to testify to the light (John 1:7). John said of Jesus,

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. He is the one of whom I said, "A man is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me." I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel. I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, "On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the

one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.” Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God. (John 2:29-34)

John the Baptist knows that Jesus is the Lamb of God. He recognizes the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. A mysterious one, who told him that these things would take place, sent him. It seems like John the Baptist is one with God in a dynamic relationship. He is giving glory to God through this testimony. Furthermore, John the Baptist is living his vocation. He believes the one who sent him to baptize. He is living in faith. In fact, he is so faithful to God that it becomes visible to so many people in Bethany ¹ that his ministry of baptizing with water for the repentance of sins draws attention from the authorities, who question John. John is hearing and obeying the will of God. John says, “I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of Him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice” (John 3:28b-29).

John is a friend of Jesus, his best man, and he is on fire with love for God. His vocation is to “make straight the way of the Lord,” (John 1:23b) and he is moving with great zeal because God is in him. Therefore, John the Baptist points out the “Lamb of God” to others. Making God visible is exactly what a believer who lives in relationship with God is supposed to do. Simick writes, “God is only proven by the ‘active life’ of the believers or Christians” (12).

Hence, others come to believe based on the testimony of those who are living in union with God. For example, Andrew believed John the Baptist’s proclamation concerning Jesus. All John the Baptist said to him was “Look, here is the Lamb of God,”

¹ Bethany that is located across the Jordan River to the east.

and Andrew followed Jesus (John 1:36). Andrew must have seen the holiness of God dwelling in John the Baptist and trusted his character. Andrew, then, believing in Jesus, tells Peter, “we have found the Messiah,” and word begins to get around because of the oneness that John the Baptist experienced with God. Hence, holiness comes from oneness with God, and it is visible in many ways to those who look on with faith. John the Baptist, having introduced Jesus as God in the flesh, changes the whole perspective of his community of believers. John joyfully says, Jesus “must increase, and I must decrease” (John 3:30). John the Baptist, after fulfilling his vocation, hands his ministry over to Jesus, saying,

The one who comes from heaven is above all; the one who belongs to the earth speaks about earthly things. The one who is from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his testimony. Whoever accepts his testimony has certified that God is true. He whom God has sent speaks the word of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God’s wrath. (John 3:31-36)

Believing is gift; however, believing remains a free choice. After John the Baptist testified, Jesus began proclaiming the truths that reveal God as he called his disciples.

Nathaniel internalizes the Prayer of Jesus, he believes he is one with God, and he is amazed

Jesus, the Son of God, filled with Spirit, is ready to baptize with the Holy Spirit. All Jesus has to say is “follow me!” and he catches Phillip, who, inspired by the power of

Jesus' words, finds his friend Nathaniel in Bethsaida, his home town, which is situated on the north east side of the sea of Gallilee (John 1:43). Phillip believes that Jesus is the Messiah. He tells Nathaniel, "We have found him about whom Moses in the Law and also in the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth" (John 2:45). Then, Phillip leads Nathaniel to Jesus, who profoundly touches Nathaniel's heart by telling Nathaniel who he was. Nathaniel, knowing that Jesus knows his inner thoughts, proclaims, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel" (John 1:49). The two friends were amazed. Simick ties the action of Jesus calling his disciples and future believers to the Prayer of Jesus. He writes, "This future glorification of Jesus implicates his new universal activity of drawing 'all men' to himself (12,32) or his gathering into one all the scattered children of God (11, 52) and empowering them by sending them in the Spirit" (34).

Nathaniel knows in his heart that Jesus has described what he believed in his inmost being. Jesus has commented that Nathaniel was a good man with no deceit in his heart (John 1:48), so Nathaniel knows that Jesus was mysteriously connected to his intellect. He knows that God is in his being, and he reacts with a full heart. Jesus, then, reveals to him that he will "see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 1:51). Nathaniel does see the risen Jesus on the Sea of Tiberius (John 21:2). Nathaniel may have been in the room when Jesus breathed his Spirit into his disciples. John the Evangelist says, "There are many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them was written down, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). The broad statement by the evangelist opens the possibility that Nathaniel did see the heavens opened and the angels ascending

and descending on Jesus just as Jesus said. Jesus is the “Holy One of God” in the Gospel of John, and the evangelist is teaching how the characters are related to God in different ways.

Mary the Mother of Jesus Responds to his Priestly Prayer with Faith

Mary, the mother of Jesus, says very little in the Gospel of John. However, her words demonstrate that she is very much one with God. At the wedding in Cana, “when the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘they have no wine.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’”(John 2:3-5) Then, Jesus performed the first of his signs by changing the water into wine. Mary knew Jesus better than anyone. She was the mother of the Son of God, the Incarnate Word, and she had no trouble saying yes to the will of God when approached by the angel Gabriel. Mary’s command to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you,” is a pure act of faith. Simick notes, “Unlike the perfect unity (or solidarity) that exists between the Father and the Son, the unity of Jesus with the believers is measured by the *faith* response of the believers” (33). Mary could have easily kept silent. Yet, through a response to faith, she motivates Jesus to act on the behalf of others. She intercedes for the needy. She has compassion for the wedding party and calls on her son to help. The changing of the water into wine “revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him” (John 2:11). Mary’s faith seems to radiate to the other disciples.

Mary’s relationship with God serves as a model for the disciples of Jesus and for believers today. Mary knows that everything, including herself, came to be through

Jesus. She believes that Jesus is somehow one with God, the creator and sustainer of all reality, who existed outside reality and then entered reality through her womb. Mary is the privileged mother of the Word incarnate, and this gives her a special kind of faith that relates her with God. Therefore, her faith in her relationship with God somehow motivates God.

Nicodemus wrestles with the Prayer of Jesus

Nicodemus, who believes that Jesus is “a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs apart from the presence of God,” (John 3:2) may have a hard time believing that he can be one with God. Nicodemus visits Jesus at night because he is afraid that his peers will ridicule him. Jesus teaches him that, “no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above,” (John 3:3) “without being born of water and Spirit” (John 3:5). At this point, Nicodemus may be rightly confused. Raymond Brown asks, “Could Nicodemus have understood this begetting of the Spirit” (*John I-XII* 140). He writes,

Nicodemus himself could have understood against a background of OT ideas about sonship, spirit, etc. However, there can be little doubt that the Christian readers of John would have interpreted vs. 5. “being begotten of water and Spirit,” as a reference to Christian Baptism; and so we have a secondary level of sacramental reference. Needless to say, if we think of John iii as based on a historical scene, Nicodemus could have understood nothing of Christian baptism or the theology of rebirth associated with it. (*John I-XIII* 142)

Ultimately, Brown thinks the author or redactor, “like so many characters in the Johannine discourses has served as a foil for those whose misunderstanding or failure to understand causes Jesus to expound his revelation in detail. As Jesus launches into the long explanation...Nicodemus fades off into the darkness whence he came” (*John I-XII* 145). In other words, the genius who has brilliantly woven the narrative together is using the character of Nicodemus to make some points.

Instead of believing that the power of God is capable of anything, Nicodemus asks, “How can these things be?” (John 3:9) Jesus, in order to make a distinction, says “this is the judgment, that light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil...but those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God” (John 3:19-21). Jesus says their deeds have been done in God. In God, for Jesus, means that those who truly seek God will live in God and that God will be reflected through them. Jesus is also teaching Nicodemus and everyone that God loves believers where they are. Jesus says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16). Jesus belongs to believers and believers belong to him. Jesus is trying to teach Nicodemus and other believers that God knows their hearts better than believers know them; so as believers, we should not be afraid to expose ourselves to his light. However, Nicodemus, and many believers, at this point, are struggling with their commitment to Jesus, even when they know that Jesus is from God by the signs he is performing, the testimony of others, and the radiance of God shining through men and women in their communities. The author or redactor does a good job of reflecting the Prayer of Jesus into this scene. The story of Nicodemus

wrestling with the Word of God in his life demonstrates another form of oneness with God.

The Samaritan Woman receives the Prayer of Jesus as a gift of mercy. She is willing to share the gift with others

The Samaritan woman experiences oneness with God through her intellect and in her heart. When Jesus tells the Samaritan woman “you have had five husbands” (John 4:18), her heart is opened and her intellect begins to absorb the divine touch. She knows Jesus is a prophet or someone who can read her inner heart (John 4:19). She prefers the light of Christ because it lifts the burdens of the past from her soul. Jesus is giving himself to her through his mercy. Simick writes, “*Jesus’ prayer ‘that they may all be one’* is more radical and fundamental: it is rooted in the being of God, revealed in Christ, and in the redemptive action of God in Christ. Hence this unity is not that of a human organization, but is a gift of divine unity” (7). The gift of oneness that Jesus is giving to the Samaritan woman is “fellowship with the Father and the Son. Such fellowship is possible to those who know that the Father’s love for his Son proves his love for them” (Simick 7). As the dialogue continues, the Samaritan woman begins to figure out that she is in conversation with someone who is different from her peers.

Jesus further captivates the Samaritan woman’s heart by saying to her, “If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water” (John 4:10). Living water is very appealing to the Samaritan woman, who has to toil for water alone at “a well about a hundred feet deep” (Brown, *John I-XII* 169). The Samaritan woman is not only separated from the chosen people of Israel, she may also be separated from her own community. She chose to go to the well in the heat of the day: “The woman’s choice of timing for coming to the well is unusual; such a chore was done in the morning and evening” (Brown, *John I-XII* 169). In spite of her ethnic and perhaps social isolation, the woman is

attracted to Jesus, whom she calls a Jew. Francis J. Moloney writes, “Only here in the Fourth Gospel is Jesus called a *Ioudaios*” (117). The Samaritan woman is looking for a deeper meaning to life, and she nevertheless responds when Jesus asks her for a drink. During the conversation, the Samaritan woman’s mind makes a distinction between the Jews worshiping in Jerusalem and the Samaritans worshiping on the mountain; however, her heart is focused on God.

Jesus teaches her that “the hour is coming, and now is here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24).

The Samaritan woman is captivated by the words of Jesus, who reveals to her that he is the Messiah (John 4:26). She realizes the truth. God is spirit, and she somehow knows she belongs to God. In God, there is no separation between Jews and Samaritans or sinners and the righteous (Gal. 3:28). The Samaritan woman has experienced the loving mercy of God. She has been given living water, which is oneness with God, and she wants to share this with others. She is not afraid anymore. All Jesus had to do was teach her that he is the gift of God’s love revealed to her and to all. The Samaritan woman is awestruck by her connection to God. She leaves her water vessel behind in order to proclaim her newly found freedom in God. The Samaritan woman, fueled by the oneness with God she experienced in her dialogue with Jesus, is ready to make God visible the best way she knows how.

The Samaritan woman hurries to the city to tell others to “come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done” (John 4:29). The light of Christ has affected

her heart. She is able to know who she is. She is a child of God, and God has lifted the burden of sin from her. She is free. The oneness that she experiences with God sheds light on every aspect of her life. She knows that God is pleased with her just the way she is. God loves her, and she knows that nothing can separate her from God. She is connected to God through her spirit. She does not need a mountain or a temple to worship God. God feeds her spirit, and there is enough living water or oneness with God in her that she is compelled to make God visible to others, who then find Jesus.

The Prayer of Jesus is reflected in the Royal Official's faith

The royal official, “whose son lay ill in Capernaum,” (John. 4:46) encounters Jesus in Cana, about twelve miles away from his home in Capernaum. He pleads with Jesus to heal his son. Jesus, implying that some wanted to see a sign, says, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe” (John 4:48). However, the royal official, “who came to Jesus without having seen any miracles,” does not give up (Koester 51). He intercedes with a faithful heart, saying, “Sir, come before my little boy dies” (John. 4:49). The man believes that Jesus is the Messiah. His heart believes in the power of God. He knows that nothing is impossible for God, and he approaches Jesus without fear. He believes that somehow he has an inner connection with God through faith. Simick concludes from his study on the Prayer of Jesus that “faith is one of the principles of unity (Jn 17, 21) that must live between believers” (36). The royal official’s oneness with God as reflected in the Prayer of Jesus is absolute faith in God. Jesus tells him to “Go, your son will live” (John 4:50). While the man is on his way to Capernaum, his servants meet him and tell him that his son is well. The man figures out that his son was healed at the exact time when the words came out of Jesus’ mouth. This is the second sign that Jesus performs in

the Gospel of John, and it relates to “those who will believe” in Jesus “through their word” (John 17:20). This event strengthened the royal official’s faith in God. His oneness with God through faith made God visible and “his whole household came to believe” (John 4:53).

The Bread of Life Discourse Reflects the Power of the Prayer of Jesus to Unite the Community

It is important to understand that while Jesus is drawing many people into oneness with him through the events, characters, and teachings in the Gospel of John, he is also stirring up enough controversy that many people are choosing to go away from him. This becomes evident within the sixth chapter of John in the teaching the scholars call, “The Bread of Life Discourse.”

First, Jesus performs his fourth sign. Because of the magnitude of this event, many came to believe in Jesus. Jesus took five barley loaves and two fish, “and when he had given thanks he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted” (John 6:11-12). Jesus fed five thousand people in this event. The people realized that this was a miraculous event. They said, “This indeed is the prophet who has come into the world” (John 6:14b). Moreover, the crowds were so overwhelmed they “were about to come and take him by force to make him king” (John 6:15). Jesus was attracting many to himself by these events. Therefore, the people wanted more.

Later, when they cornered Jesus, he began to teach them. Jesus said, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you” (John 6: 26-27). The people were very

interested in food and in eternal life, but they turned their hearts to God and asked, “What must we do to perform the works of God” (John 6:28)? Jesus said, “This is the work of God that you believe in him who he sent” (John 6:29). Jesus was teaching the crowds that he is the revelation of the Father’s work. Again, faith, both individual and communal is critical to living in oneness with God as reflected in the Prayer of Jesus.

Simick proclaims,

Faith means to see in Christ the mystery of communion of the divine persons. On the one hand, the faith opens to the mystery of the divine communion, and on the other, it is the communion between the believers in God. In the proposition “*that they may be one even as we are one*” (Jn 17,22), we notice two statements of faith joined together by a $\kappa\alpha\theta\omega\sigma$ clause: “*that they may be one (even) as we are one.*” This means that when the community becomes one, the believers makes the divine communion visible. (37)

Did the believing Johannine community make the divine communion visible?

Making the divine communion visible can be seen in the celebration of the Eucharist through the centuries. The canonical exegesis of the Prayer of Jesus illustrates a Roman Catholic understanding of oneness with God in Christian communion with neighbor through the efficacious power of the Mass. However, Simick warns that “there is a danger that the richness of the prayer may be impoverished by an over concentration on this one aspect” (6). Christian unity and the teachings of Jesus cause division. In Jesus’ day, the people wanted to know what work Jesus was performing and what sign he was doing because they remembered the works of Moses, who, with their ancestors, ate

manna in the desert; however, Jesus was keen on setting them straight. Jesus told them, “It was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God which comes down from heaven gives life to the world” (John 6:32-33).

At this point, the people were starving for this heavenly bread, so they asked Jesus where they could get some of it. Jesus says,

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty... Everything that the Father gives to me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of the one who sent me... This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life. (John 6:35-39)

Jesus is teaching the crowd that he is the Messiah, the one who comes down from heaven, and he will never drive away anyone who comes to him. He is teaching the crowds to believe in him, to feed on him, and to spend eternity as one with him.

On the other hand, some of the people do not accept the teachings of Jesus. They do not believe that he came down from heaven because they know that he came from Nazareth. Therefore, Jesus clarifies his teaching, saying,

No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me... they shall all be taught by God... whoever believes has eternal life... I am the living bread that came down from heaven... whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the

world... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you... whoever eats me will live because of me. (John 6:44-59)

Clearly, Jesus is giving prospective believers a difficult choice to make.

This teaching is offensive to many who are listening. Jesus further clarifies his teachings by asking, “Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe” (John 6:61-64). Jesus, after making a clear distinction between the spiritual and corporal worlds, witnesses even some of his disciples departing. Therefore, he asks the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” Simon Peter answers him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe that you are the “Holy one of God” (John 6:68-70). Peter, whose character will be analyzed later, clearly proclaims he believes in Jesus at this point, while others are leaving.

Jesus has made the choice to accept him optional. The prayer reads “that they may ($\omega\sigma\tau\nu$) be one” (John 17:21). The word “may” implies that a person is not forced to believe. All Jesus is doing is teaching people to believe that he is from God and that he is here to reveal the Father to his people. Jesus’ body and blood as a source of food which leads to eternal life is difficult for open hearts, let alone for worldly hearts. Most people are looking for food. They are hungry. Others are looking for a dynamic Messiah who will free them from the Romans. Others seek to kill Jesus because he reaches out to those characters and groups of people who are marginalized by the Jewish law. Ultimately, life in God or life away from God is a choice.

A man born blind believes, and begins to live the Prayer of Jesus in Faith

A good disciple asks his teacher questions. While walking, Jesus encounters a man who has been blind from birth. “His disciples ask him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?’” Jesus answers, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s work might be revealed to him. We must work the works of the one who sent me while it is day” (John 9:2-4). Jesus uses the pronoun we. The disciples must have come to his attention because Jesus was inviting them into his works. Jesus says, “As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world” (John 9:5). All eyes were on Jesus. “He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, ‘Go wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which means sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see” (John 9:6-7). Simick writes, “The theme of faith is beautifully illustrated in the episode of the congenial blind man (Jn 9). It is a passage from blindness and from darkness to the light; and it ends in the personal encounter with Christ, the Light of the world, and it is, therefore, a total adhesion to the Son of God” through faith (36).

Total adhesion to the Son of God is the oneness with God in faith exemplified in the Prayer of Jesus. Again, faith is a choice. Many people recognize the healed man. Others question his identity. The man testifies that he was blind and now is able to see. Therefore, they bring him to the Pharisees, where he again testifies that he was blind and now can see. The Pharisees do not believe the man’s testimony because the sign happened on the Sabbath. Then, the Pharisees question the man’s parents, who say, “we know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that he now sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age” (John 9:20-21).

The Pharisees were examining the healing in order to make a decision. The gospel writer tells the reader that the man's parents were afraid to testify about Jesus healing their son because they did not want to be exiled from the synagogue (John 9:22).

Therefore, the man gives another testimony, but the Pharisees were not satisfied so they again ask, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" (John 9:26) At this point, the healed blind man is moved by faith into oneness with God. Jesus said this man had never sinned (John 9:3). The man knows that only God can give sight to a man born blind. God has touched the man's heart as well as his eyes. He is living in the personal encounter with Christ.

The dialogue continues with the man facing the authorities without fear. The story reads,

"I have already told you and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" Then they reviled him... The man answered, "Here is the astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes... And they drove him out. Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." (John 9:27-39)

The healed man calls Jesus Lord, and he worships him. He is not afraid of the authorities because he knows the truth. God has revealed himself to the man in such a profound way that he gives glory to God. God is one with the man. God is moving the man's heart in such a way that the man cannot help but live in relationship with God.

The Prayer of Jesus expresses the relational oneness in the Good Shepherd and his sheep

Jesus uses images in everyday life to express his relationship with his people. The image of Jesus as the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep sets up a mysterious oneness between the Lord and his people. Jesus says, "The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out...the sheep follow him because they know his voice" (John 10:2-4). Jesus is continually calling his people through his Word. Being open to the voice of Jesus, which comes through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13) is like sheep listening to their shepherd. A sheep is ever mindful of his shepherd. Oneness with God is being mindful of God's presence in oneself, in others, and in reality. It requires listening, discerning, and trust. A sheep trusts his shepherd. A good shepherd does everything he can to ensure a good life for his sheep. Jesus says, "The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep" (John 10:11).

Simick marks, "such intimacy of Jesus with his disciples is once again illustrated in the Good Shepherd Discourses (Jn 10, 1-18) where Jesus is the model Good Shepherd because he knows his sheep so intimately even to the point of knowing each by name" (31). He adds, "The same intimate relationship with his disciples is what we see in the second half of the Gospel too, most especially in our text (Jn 17, 20-26) where we see

him wrapped up in prayer for them” (31). Wrapped up in prayer is a good example of oneness with God in the innermost depths of one’s consciousness. Jesus, in prayer, has the attention of the Father, the disciples, future believers, and his present and future activities in his mind.

From the evangelist’s perspective, Jesus knows that he is going to be crucified in order to give life to all who believe in him. Jesus is defending his children from wolves and guiding them home to the Father. Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10: 14-15). Jesus is teaching believers that oneness with him is like his oneness with the Father. Jesus is in union with the Father. He hears the Father, and the Father always hears Jesus (John 11:42). He is letting the Father glorify him (John 8:54). He is giving glory to the Father (John 11:40). “Thus, we realize that mutual unity between the Father and the Son is not a static relation but a dynamic one. It consists of an activity originating with the Father and then manifested in the Son as *‘My Father is working still, and I am working’* (Jn 5, 17)” (Simick 22). Their work is the work of salvation. “The Father and Son are one in revelatory and salvific works which the Father accomplishes through the Son” (Simick 18). The model of the Father and Son relationship demonstrates some of the characteristics of a believer who is in union with God. Jesus says, “I have other sheep who do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd” (John 11:16). Jesus is teaching believers that he is the only shepherd and that believers will hear his voice.

Martha and Mary demonstrate the uniqueness of individual relationships reflected in the Prayer of Jesus

The characters of Martha and Mary offer believers different ways of being united with Christ. Oneness with God is given to believers while they remain free, unique individuals. Simick writes, “Our examination of the relationality between Jesus and the Father and between Jesus and the believers, leads us also to examine the inner unity of believers themselves” (35). The inner unity of believers is unique.

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, he went to visit Lazarus in Bethany.² “There they gave a dinner for him [Jesus]. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus’ feet and wiped them with her hair” (John 12:2-3). Luke’s Gospel reveals more of the spiritual dimension of the characters. Luke writes,

Martha welcomed him [Jesus] into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her. (10:38-42)

A tension arises in the scene, and Jesus is aware of each believer’s intentions.

² The Bethany that is located two miles outside of Jerusalem.

Both Mary and Martha receive Jesus into their hearts. Martha chooses to do that which she thinks does not deny her communion with Jesus. Martha serves. However, Jesus teaches believers that listening to him is more fruitful. Jesus is teaching believers to welcome him into their hearts. He teaches believers to pay attention to what he is saying. Is it better to listen to the Lord when he speaks to the inner being of a believer or to busy oneself with service? Jesus will never take the choice away from his children. Moreover, Jesus loves each of his children just the way they are. In fact, Jesus knows that his children will have to serve.

After Lazarus died, as Jesus was entering the village, “Martha was the first to meet Jesus, and she emerges as a paradigm of faith in the middle of grief” (Koester 66). As the Gospel depicts Martha, she seems fairly composed. “She takes initiative in going to meet Jesus, and there is no mention of her weeping” (Koester 66). Martha’s faith is an example of a unique level of oneness in the heart of a believer. In her disappointment and grief, Martha says, “Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died [But] even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you” (John 11:21-22). Jesus tests Martha’s faith further, saying,

“Your brother will rise.” Martha said to him, “I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.” (John 11:23-27)

Martha’s faith is strong. Her oneness with Jesus is evident in her trusting heart. Koester writes, “The exemplar quality of her [Martha’s] confession is reflected in the similarities

between her words and the Gospel writer's statement of purpose, which is that the readers might believe that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" and that by believing they might "have life in his name" (66). Martha does not waiver. "Moreover, she makes her confession as a response to Jesus' words, without having seen the miracle of Lazarus's resurrection" (Koester 66).

On the other hand "Jesus responded to Mary with tears rather than with words about faith that he spoke to Martha" (Koester 67). Moreover, "the Gospel says that Jesus was "troubled" during his encounter with Mary...Jesus was also "deeply disturbed" when he saw Mary and others weeping" (Koester 67). Mary's oneness with Jesus was on a different level than Martha's. "Mary wept and Jesus wept" (Koester 67). Oneness in weeping with the Lord was the last action before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. The action of weeping in oneness with Mary may have motivated Jesus to action. Either way, Jesus demonstrates the glory of God by raising Lazarus from the dead in union with the Father. "Jesus raised his eyes and said, 'Father I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe me.' And when he said this, he cried out in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out" (John 11:42-44). Moreover, "many of the Jews who had come to see Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him" (John 11:45). Faith in oneness with God prompts action by God, which makes God visible, and which in turn fosters faith.

The Prayer of Jesus affects the heart of Peter

When Jesus gathers his disciples together for a meal, he again reveals to them his identity. By revealing his identity, Jesus reveals to his disciples their identity. The

teachings of Jesus and the reaction of the disciples within the foot washing dialogue illuminate what it means to be one with God. First, “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet” (John 13:3-5). In one way, the foot washing is an action of the Father united with the Son in relationship with the disciples. Simick writes, “The relationship between the Father and the Son occupies an important place in the Fourth Gospel. Their relation is one of action and purpose whereby the Son loves, wills and acts, in a similar way as the Father does” (14).

Peter is mystified. He knows that Jesus is the Messiah (Mark 8:29, Matt 16:16, Luke 9:20). Moreover, Peter knows who he is. Peter remembers when Jesus requested that he put out into deeper waters for a catch and the boats were filled to the point of sinking. He remembers that he fell on his knees and said, “Depart from me. Lord, for I am a sinful man” (Luke 5:8). Now, Jesus the Lord “came to Simon Peter, who said to him ‘Master, are you going to wash my feet?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will understand later’” (John 13:6-7).

Intellectually, Peter may be narrowing his oneness with God because of his lack of understanding. He knows that Jesus is the Lord and that he himself is a sinner. In addition, “the washing of another’s feet, begrimed by travel upon dusty roads in sandals, was a menial task not required even of Jewish slaves. Such utter humiliation on the part of Jesus leads Peter to object” (Brown, *Epistles* 72). Jesus says to him, “Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me” (John 13:8). From his heart, Peter replies, “Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well” (John 13:8). Peter desires

to please the Lord, but he still does not understand. To make matters more confusing, Jesus says, “If I, therefore, the master and teacher have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do...If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it” (John 13:14-17). Understanding the relationship with the model is key to ministry. Ultimately, Jesus is inviting Peter, his disciples, and believers or his “children” into communion with him and the Father in action while simultaneously teaching them that he is leaving this world. Jesus commands them to love one another. “As I have loved you, so you should love one another. This is how all will know you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35).

Loving one another is making God visible in the world. Simick writes,

In fact, when Jesus declares: “*I made known to them your name, and I will make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.*” This means that the unity that is desired is brought about in reciprocal love or when anyone loves Jesus it is the Father who loves him in return (Jn 16,27). This becomes understandable when it is understood that the communion implies a community of life between God and believers. For the life of God is the outpouring of love. (28)

Peter loves Jesus, but he is troubled again and wants to remain with the Lord to the point of laying down his life for Jesus. However, Jesus predicts that Peter will deny him three times (John 13:36-38). The Word of God spoken by Jesus causes the believer to wrestle in relationship with God.

Peter does deny Jesus three times, and there is no account of Peter at the crucifixion. However, after the resurrection Peter “went into the tomb and saw the burial cloth that covered [Jesus’] head” (John 20:6-7). Furthermore, Peter was present when the risen “Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them ‘Peace be with you...As the Father has sent me, so I send you,’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained’ ” (John 20:21-23). Moreover, Peter was present “when Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberius” (John 21:1). Peter and several disciples, who had seemingly returned to their former way of life as fishermen, “Went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them “Children, have you caught anything to eat?” (John 21:5) Being called children caught their attention. Jesus said, “Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something.” So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish (John 21:6). After an intense struggle with the fish, “the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord.’ When Simon Peter had heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea (John 21:7).

Peter, who had received the Holy Spirit, did not recognize the Lord. He had to rely on the Beloved Disciple for this information. “Some interpreters have suggested that Peter represents a group of Christians distinct from the Johannine community because of the way the evangelist portrays Peter’s relationship to the Beloved Disciple” (Koester 70). Nevertheless, Peter’s relationship or oneness with the Lord is present and unique. He

trusts the Beloved Disciple's knowledge of the presence of the Lord. Even though "when they made a great catch of fish, the Beloved Disciple was the first to recognize Jesus, [it was Peter who] hurled himself into the sea and finally brought the net to shore" (Koester 71). Moreover, when Peter was asked three times by Jesus, "Simon son of John do you love me more than these?," he said to him, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." In fact, he said, "Lord you know everything; you know that I love you" (John 21:15-17). Peter demonstrates his level of oneness with God by believing that God knows everything that is in his heart and that God loves him no matter what human faults he may have. Faith causes Peter to have concern for his relationship with the Beloved Disciple, who also has a unique relationship with the Lord.

The Beloved Disciple internalizes the Prayer of Jesus

The Beloved Disciple "plays a distinctive role in John's gospel...He appears close to Jesus in the gospel's climactic scenes, and the evangelist carefully defines his relationship to Jesus, Peter, and the Johannine community" (Culpepper 121). Somehow, the Beloved Disciple's relationship or oneness with Jesus allows him to gather and understand important information. For example, when Jesus says, "Amen, Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me. The disciples looked at one another, at a loss as to whom he meant. One of the disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was reclining at Jesus' side. So Simon Peter nodded to him to find out whom he meant" (John 13:22-25). Jesus answers the Beloved Disciple. "The first reference to the Beloved Disciple graphically defines his relationship to Jesus. He is loved by Jesus and reclines on Jesus' chest at the last supper. This detail indicates not only a favored position of intimacy, it recalls Jesus' relation to the Father in 1:18" (Culpepper 121). Simick mentions, "The mutual indwelling

of the Father and the Son is shared by, and to a certain extent reproduced, in those who believe in Christ” (27). It seems as if the Beloved Disciple believes in Christ. “Because he abides in Jesus’ love this disciple can share in the knowledge of the Betrayer’s identity” (Culpepper 121). Moreover, “He alone of the disciples is mentioned at the foot of the cross, and it is to him that the mother of Jesus is given” (Culpepper 121). The narrative reads, “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother ‘Woman, behold your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home” (John 19:26-27).

At the foot of the cross, the Blessed Mother and the Beloved Disciple, along with Jesus, are experiencing the Father’s work. “The Father and the Son are represented as one, yet with distinct individuality. Thus, the works of Jesus point to the union between the Father and the Son which results from possessing the same life which they tend to communicate to others” (Simick 15). The Beloved Disciple and the Blessed Mother are the closest recipients to the redemptive action of God manifest in the Paschal Mystery. By the grace of God they are one with God in this moment, yet they remain distinctly individual. “Jesus said, ‘I thirst’... When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, ‘It is finished.’ And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit” (John 19:28-30). Raymond Brown comments, “with the commission to his mother Jesus finished the work he came to do” (*Epistles* 94). By his dying on the cross in the presence of his mother and the Beloved Disciple, the glory of God was made visible, and a new community was born.

“In the New Testament ‘glory belongs to both God and Christ (cf. Acts 7,2; Eph 1,17; 1 Cor 2,8; Jas 2,1). It is the visible manifestation of their presence and potency” (Simick 22). Moreover, the Blessed Mother and the Beloved Disciple witness “the unity

of love and work [that] seem to be connected with the unity of glory especially in Jn 17, 24 [the prayer of Jesus]” (Simick 21). Precisely, at the foot of the cross, the disciple whom Jesus loved and his mother Mary see,

where love is expressed in terms of the glory that the Father gave to Jesus in his preexistence (“*to behold the glory which you have given me in your love for me...*”). Thus, the glory of the Father was made visible so that men could see: And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (Jn 1,14) (Simick 21)

The testimony of the Beloved Disciple is the Gospel of John. He writes, “It is this disciple who testifies to these things and has written them” (John 21:24).

The Beloved Disciple’s oneness with God is largely responsible for the Prayer of Jesus and the Gospel of John. The Beloved Disciple with the Blessed Mother, “together mother and son, they form the nucleus of the new family of faith. The other disciples are brothers and members of his family; all believers are the children of God” (Culpepper 122). The Beloved Disciple’s faith in oneness with God fostered a community, which is the “fruit” born of Jesus’ glorification (12:23-24, 32), “and the cross gave shape to its corporate life” (Koester 239). Jesus prays that “that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me” (John 17:21). Simick suggests,

This is the basic Johannine theology. That is, the relation of Jesus to the Father becomes the basis, origin and exemplar of believer’s relation to God; that the believers are included in the divine unity through Jesus, who

is one with the Father and that they become integrated into this communion life between the Father and the Son, so that they could share in the richness and power of God's own life which Jesus received from his Father. In this the communion of the Father and the Son becomes the ideal of the relationship between Jesus and his believers. (27)

The Beloved Disciple is writing this, witnessing to this narrative for the community of believers for whom Jesus is praying. The Beloved Disciple believes everything he has testified to and has written. "Jesus is depicted in the Gospel as forming a community around himself and imparting to that community the revelation of God, so is the picture presented of the believers as people forming a community among themselves in which they experience faith, love, and the Spirit" (Simick 26). The Beloved Disciple has great faith in his oneness with God, and he witnesses in faith with the Blessed Mother to form the community of believers.

The Prayer of Jesus, at this point, through form, literary and canonical criticisms may be seen as a powerful, efficacious, unifying masterpiece, which has touched the hearts of believers over time. In addition, The Prayer of Jesus demonstrates diverse levels of oneness with God, especially in the hearts of the characters, in the events, and in the teachings of Jesus within the Gospel of John. Moreover, the Prayer of Jesus is a summarizing statement that culminates Jesus teaching as shown through the various examples of oneness in the scenes of the Fourth Gospel. Hence, some theological reflections of the exegetical criticisms followed by a theological reflection on what oneness with God means for us today are in order.

Theological Reflection: Form Criticism

The content in the Prayer of Jesus has many theological implications. First, Jesus is teaching his hearers to pray. In addition, Jesus is teaching his disciples to believe in him. Faith will unlock the rest of the prayer. If people believe, they will be one as the Father and Jesus are one. Believers will be in dialogue with the Father and Jesus. Hearers of the word, as well as the final redactor, are living in a post-Pentecostal age. The death and resurrection of Jesus, along with the pouring forth of his Holy Spirit on Pentecost, fulfills all of salvation history throughout all time. The Prayer of Jesus is a reflection of these truths. Jesus tells the Father that he wants his disciples to see the glory that the Father has given him. God's glory is clearly manifest in the celebration of the Eucharist every day into eternity. Being brought to perfection as one in God implies that this is a process. Each day Jesus nourishes believers through the word of God being proclaimed in the liturgy. Moreover, believers are transformed into oneness with Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit and offered to the Father as a gift when they celebrate the Eucharist (Driscoll 146). This celebration unites the believing community to God. Therefore, it must be made visible to the world. Moloney writes, the "believers have a mission to make God known" (477). In short, believers can see most of the truths in salvation history in the Prayer of Jesus because its end is oneness with God. What is the unifying force?

Theological Reflection: Literary Criticism

The Holy Spirit is the unifying force that solves the mystery of the Prayer of Jesus so far. The dialogical relationship between the Father and Son models the dialogical

relationship between the believers and the Holy Spirit, who is the link to the Godhead. Therefore, the Prayer of Jesus, which is an action of the Holy Spirit, unites believers to the Godhead. If Jesus is praying for this action to happen, it will happen, and it will continue to happen for eternity. This means that the communication channel is always open to the Godhead. However, those who hear the word are free to believe or reject the Spirit. This means that believers are one with God through the Holy Spirit as far as they believe. This relationship is a gift that may be lived on many levels, depending on one's belief. Ratzinger says belief is given in various degrees of endowment, as is musical talent (94). Various degrees of faith can be seen in the characters in the gospels and through the lives of the saints. Faith or belief can be likened to love. For some reason, people love in varying degrees. Sometimes, people are head over heels in love with another person. Is this a gift? When a person's heart is touched so deeply by another heart, it is made visible through action. In a similar way, the Word of God touches the heart of the believer and the believer reacts by falling in love with the Word, who is Jesus.

When Jesus makes this prayer, he is revealing that he desires to be one with them. How deeply does this stir the heart of the believer? Peter lived so deeply in his relationship with God that he was able to allow God's power to work through him. Hearts were converted, the sick were healed, the lame walked, the dead were raised, many were baptized, believers were called and united, and Peter died for his belief. If a person loves Jesus, his glory should be visible in his/her life. The relationship of believers should be filled with God's power. How is union with God made visible?

Theological Reflection: Canonical Criticism

Clearly, there is an underlying theme in the community of believers. From the doctrinal beliefs of the early church to the mystical holiness of the early saints and through the visible holiness of recent popes, believers can see God's glory, and everyone listed celebrated the Eucharist. The faith of St. Augustine, the love of St. Bernard, the hope of Pope Benedict, and the vision of Pope John Paul II reflect the relentless love of the Father in Jesus united to these men by the power of the Holy Spirit. The last words of Jesus in the prayer say, "I made your name known to them and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26). The Greek word for love here is *αγαπη*. Love is the key. The unconditional love that the Father has for all humanity resulted in Jesus, who breathed his Holy Spirit of love so deeply into humanity that the reflection of his love is echoing throughout the centuries when humanity celebrates the Eucharist in memory of Jesus. The love of Jesus that burns in the hearts of believers is the greatest witness to the eternal glory of God.

Conclusion

The self-giving love of Jesus manifest in the Paschal Mystery is the driving force that gives eternal life to the soul. The life that Jesus gives is a life of oneness with God, both on an intimate personal level and as a collective whole. The life that Jesus gives is "the glory you [Father] gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one" (John 7:2-23). The glory that the Father gave Jesus is the glory that Jesus gives back to the Father through his death and resurrection "that the world may know that you sent me and that you loved them even as you loved me" (John 17:23). Jesus' glory is giving his life for the forgiveness of

sins so that humanity may be one with the Father in Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The characters in the Gospel of John and believers, saints, and popes over time have demonstrated oneness with God both in a personal unique way and as a collective whole; the same is true for believers today. There is no difference. The glory that Jesus gave to the Father in the Paschal Mystery gave birth to a community of believers at the foot of the cross that will never end. One could say that Jesus breathed his Spirit into the Church at that moment and from then on believers have re-presented Jesus' glory in remembrance and in praise of him. Jesus' sacrifice is the communion of humanity with God and neighbor. The community of believers gives thanksgiving and praise for Jesus' glory by celebrating the Eucharist. The Eucharist makes the Church. The Eucharist makes the glory of God visible. The children of God see the glory the Father gave Jesus in the glory Jesus gave the Father and humanity, and they participate in union with God through faith. Believers are one with God in his glory. The glory of God may be seen in the serving actions of his people.

Ultimately, the words "they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me and that you loved them even as you loved me" (John 17:22-23), are Jesus' way of asking believers to make him present. For believers, Jesus is asking them to make him present to the world. Jesus is saying that you are my body and my blood. I live in you and you live in me. Jesus is a real presence in the hearts of believers. His glory is remembered and made present to the world. Hence, the Prayer of Jesus in a way is John's version of a Eucharistic institution narrative in the hearts of believers.

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