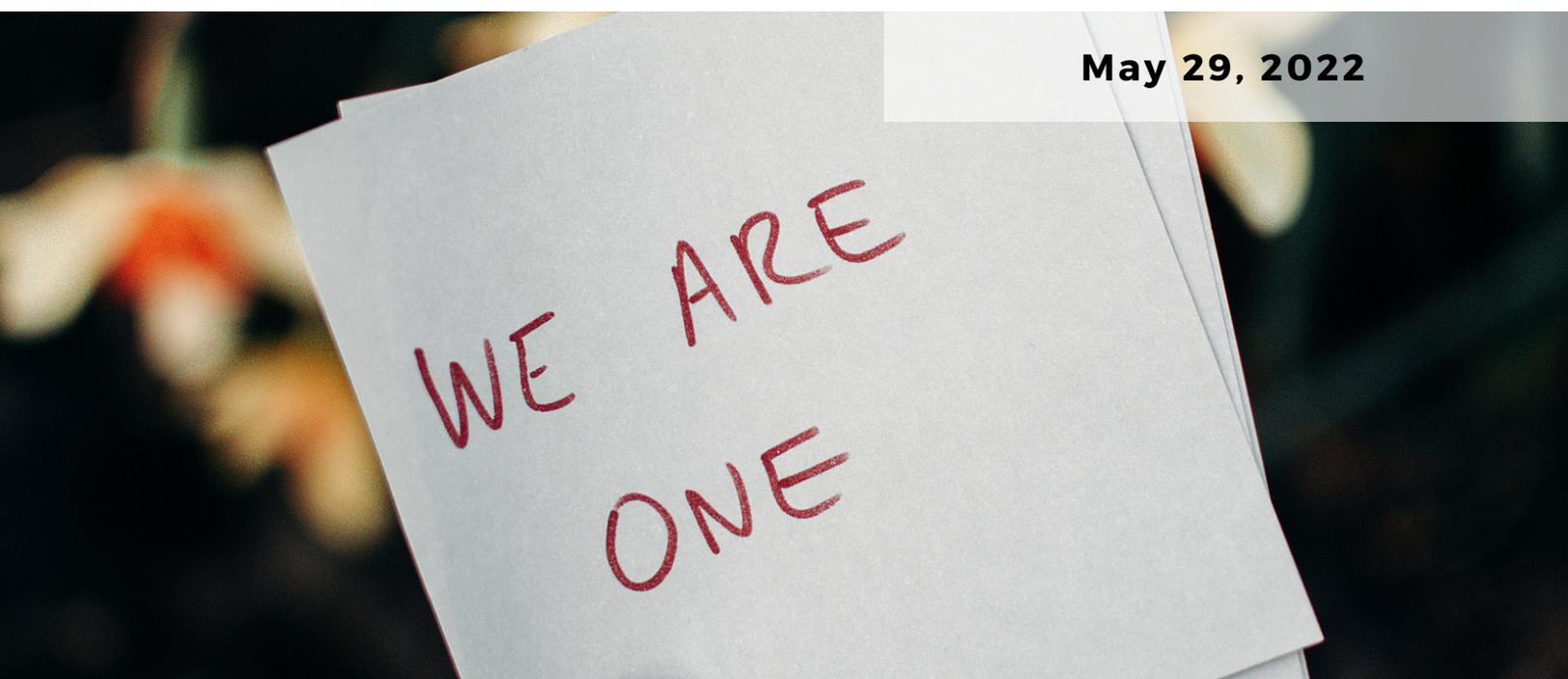


THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

May 29, 2022



WE ARE
ONE

ONE

seeking unity in the midst of division

by Drew Downs

In the 4th Century, the founding idea of catholicism was to create unity through a singular organizing ideology. Over time, this singularity led to organizing *hierarchically*. Unity came through a single power structure.

This vision of *forced* unity through order is of the same substance as *Pax Romana*: that the Roman Empire could force peace by conquering the world. Which is, charitably, not the best example of being "one."

What is interesting to me is how clearly our understanding of unity seems to *require* order. That we can't conceive of a "one" that comes through diversity. Our very definitional sense of oneness is functionally inseparable from *sameness*. Or else we require a comprehensive structure.

I suspect that the Spirit is guiding us toward a one that *doesn't* assume these things. We just can't comprehend how it would work.

EASTER

Spring 2022

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

This week we celebrate Ascension Day, one of the seven principal feasts of the church. And every year, I feel so bad for this poor holiday. It is one of the most important days in the church calendar, and has been for centuries, but we treat it like it is nothing. It is *above* each of the days of Holy Week. But who even notices it?

I suspect I know why.
It doesn't make sense to us.

It made sense to the people centuries ago. Before the Enlightenment. But as a moment in the story, we just can't wrap our heads around its true value.

So here is, in a nutshell, why people of faith cared about the Ascension and why I think it is the low-key coolest of the holy days.

1. **Prophets take off.** This is what they do in Scripture. They don't get buried after dying of old age.
2. **Jesus got out of the way.** Something *bigger* was happening. Jesus needed to take off so it could arrive.
3. **It is our turn.** Jesus leaving *physically* draws the attention from the Messiah to the disciples.

Just as we include the Ascension in our Eucharistic Prayers, to remind us that Jesus didn't just die and get resurrected but *also* ascended, we are also being continually reminded that *our* work continues.

With love,
Drew

EASTER

Spring 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 29, 2022

Collect

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting.

Amen.

Reading

From John 17:20-26

"The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one"

Reflection

This week provides us with the interesting wrinkle of the church calendar. We celebrate the Resurrection for 50 days. But after the first 40 days, we celebrate the Ascension.

In essence, we celebrate Jesus's return from the dead for six weeks, then we celebrate his ascension into heaven. Only to go back to celebrating Jesus's return from the dead for one more week.

This year, we get lots of readings from the farewell discourse in John, when Jesus is saying goodbye to the disciples at the Last Supper. And in that bon voyage, he's preparing them for life without him. It is a touching and significant sequence.

EASTER

And in this, we have Jesus telling them the *next thing* God has up that sleeve. Another Advocate. An Advocate as significant as Jesus. We know her as the Holy Spirit.

And this Advocate's place is to offer the people some of what Jesus offered, but it will be with us much longer. (Which is a whole *other* thing, by the way.)

That is the work the Spirit is called to do. But what exactly is the goal? What is the big purpose? Jesus says that it is to make us one.

Jesus ties this idea of the people being made one in the Spirit as a reflection of the oneness of Jesus with the Father. What we might say in our own words today might be: "Jesus has given us God's glory so that we may be one, as the Trinity is one".

The challenge, of course, is that we can look around and not *feel* like we're one. There are so many of us and so many filled with the Spirit, and yet we seem so divided. Perhaps now more than at any other moment in our lifetimes. Is the Spirit failing at her job? That's a scary thought.

The last two Sundays, however, reminded us of Jesus's *earlier* guidance. About keeping Jesus's command to love. And his leaving peace with us so that we might share it.

What seems to ground Jesus's final teachings is to pair two central ideas: that we are responsible and that God is offering to *help*. So the Advocate doesn't do the work *for* us, but *in us*.

Our division doesn't reflect God's failure. Just ours. And perhaps most importantly, our failure to hold ourselves, *all of us*, responsible for the oneness of the cosmos.

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