

## **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020: The 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter.**

### **Collect:**

God our redeemer,  
you have delivered us from the power of darkness  
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:  
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,  
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

### **Epistle: 1 Peter 3:13-22**

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

A reading from the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Saint John:

(John Chapter 14, verses 15-21)

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'

This is the gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Sermon/Reflection:**

**From Feeling our 'Two-ness' to Being 'One-ed to God'.**

**I Am With You**

O Children of God,  
I am with you,  
I am with you,  
I am with you.  
The Most High does not dwell  
in houses made by human  
hands,  
I am with you,  
I am with you,  
I am with you.  
O Children of God,  
I am the light above  
everything.  
I am everything.  
I am with you,  
I am with you,  
I am with you.  
Look at the living one,  
I am with you always.

~ CRC 21.03.20 ~

*Inspired by the words of Matthew 5:9,  
Matthew 28:20, Acts 7:48 and the Gospel of  
Thomas sayings 77a and 59.*

**Prayer**

O Gracious, gentle Spirit of Love,  
your energy permeates the Universe,  
igniting Earth with  
your goodness, truth and beauty.  
Open our minds and hearts  
to a deeper awareness  
of our interconnectedness with you,  
each other, and all creation.  
May we experience  
your unique presence  
within the sacred web of creation.

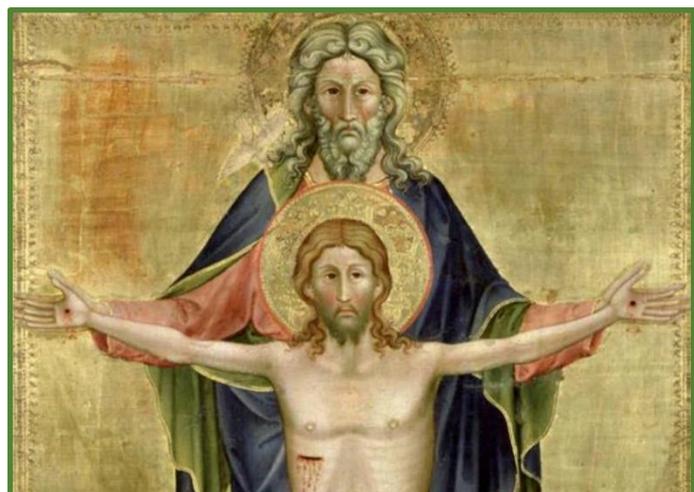
~ Author Unknown ~



*W. E. B. Du Bois*

In the American South at the turn of the twentieth century, the Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation in states that were bitterly divided by race and colour, and the embryonic civil rights movement was engaged in a struggle to fight discrimination, exclusion, and subjugation. W. E. B. Du Bois was an influential African American scholar and civil rights activist during the early part of the last century and, in 1903, he wrote an essay entitled 'Of Our Spiritual Strivings'<sup>1</sup> as part of his ongoing response to the deeply racialized and segregated culture in which he lived. Within this article he said something, that came to mind when I read today's gospel reading, relating to his own experience of being 'shut out from their world by a vast veil', he said "one ever feels his two-ness", that 'sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others' whilst also being aware of who you truly are in the depths of your being.

Today, in our reading from the gospel of John, we hear Jesus saying 'I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you'<sup>2</sup>. Previously, Jesus has told the Jews in the temple that 'the Father



*The Father and I are One*

---

<sup>1</sup> Published in: Du Bois, W. E. B. (1903) *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Dover Publications.

<sup>2</sup> John 14:20

and I are one'<sup>3</sup>, and his disciples that 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me'<sup>4</sup>. Statements such as these, which contradict two-ness and affirm unity and one-ness, were considered so blasphemous because it was felt that Jesus was 'making (himself) God'<sup>5</sup>. But is this what Jesus was saying? Was Jesus making himself God or is there another way of understanding what he was saying?

There is, in the Christian tradition, the notion of growth; the idea that we grow and mature as an integral part of our Christian journey. 'Lay aside immaturity', says the writer of Proverbs, 'and live and walk in the ways of insight'<sup>6</sup>. 'All of us', according to St. Paul, must 'come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ'<sup>7</sup>, the inference here being, perhaps, that we too should 'let the same mind be in (us) that was in Christ Jesus'<sup>8</sup>. Traditionally, Christian maturation and growth has been associated with the three stage Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive<sup>9</sup> phases of the spiritual life. Although I'm not a great fan of describing the spiritual life as a series of levels, steps, or stages (it's more of a circuitous evolutionary journey in my opinion), there may well be an inevitability to the inference of directional flow; a flow that carries us towards the unitive, towards the realisation, as Rabbi Rami Shapiro writes, that 'all diversity is part of a greater unity...everything is a facet of the one thing.'<sup>10</sup> He continues,

---

<sup>3</sup> John 10:30

<sup>4</sup> John 14:11

<sup>5</sup> John 10:33

<sup>6</sup> Proverbs 9:6

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 4:13

<sup>8</sup> Philippians 2:5

<sup>9</sup> Purgative: the eradication of bad habits; Illuminative: cleansed from attachments; Unitive: union with God

<sup>10</sup> Shapiro, R. (2013), as cited in Rohr, R. (2018) Perennial Tradition. Daily Meditations. Wednesday, August 1, 2018 Accessed from: <https://cac.org/oneness-2018-08-01/> Accessed on: 11.05.20

'everything you see, think, feel, and imagine is part of and never apart from the same Source'<sup>11</sup>, meaning God.'

But, for most of us I suspect, the assertion made by Du Bios that "one ever feels his two-ness", although written from a very different perspective, resonates precisely because we lack the sense of feeling 'part of a greater unity'. We feel our 'two-ness' so sharply, that sense of being separate and divided, separate from each other (felt all the more acutely at this time), from the natural world, and from our true selves in God. It is precisely this sense of 'two-ness' that anchors us in our dualistic mind, the mind that works in the realm of good/bad, right/wrong, them/us, either/or, mind/body, spiritual/material, human/divine; the mentality that is so far from 'the mind that was in Christ Jesus'. The mind that was in Christ Jesus was the mind of non-dual



*Julian of Norwich*

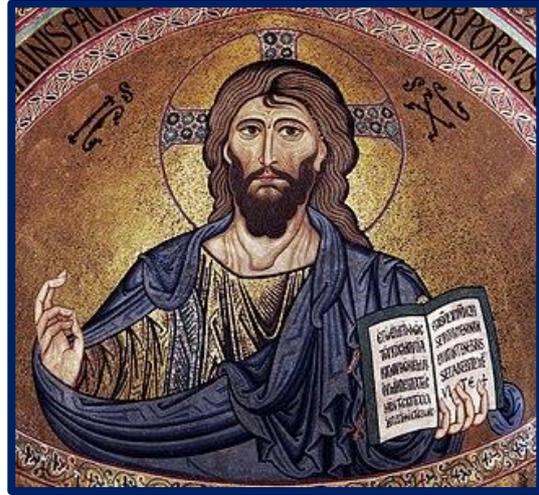
awareness, the mind that experiences interrelatedness and interconnectedness, the mind that can say 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me', the mind that can say, as Julian of Norwich declared so beautifully 'our soul is one-ed to Him...our soul is so completely one-ed to God by His own goodness, that there can be absolutely nothing at all separating God and soul'<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Julian of Norwich ~ Revelations of Divine Love. Chapter 46. Translation: Fr. John Julian, OJN.

In following 'the Way' of Jesus, we do so in the hope that we will come to live in the unitive state, that state of mystical or divine union where, as Cynthia Bourgeault explains, 'the former sense of self dissolves, and in its place there arises a capacity to live a flowing, unboundaried life



in which the person becomes "oned" with God...and oned with one's neighbour'<sup>13</sup>. In becoming 'oned with God', 'one is fully joined to God in love, (and) subsumed in God through that love'<sup>14</sup>. This, I think, is what Jesus, ever the poet and artist of life, meant when he said 'the Father and I are one', or 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me'. Jesus, who lived with the 'mind of Christ'<sup>15</sup>, lived in the unitive state, he lived an 'unboundaried life' in which his sense of self had dissolved and he had become 'oned with God'. In this sense, he 'fully expressed God'<sup>16</sup> in a way that no one had before, or has since. He could express his oneness with God without fear of blasphemy, and confidently say 'I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you'.

In this time of confinement, when we remain cut off from our communities, apart from those we love, and our lives are characterised by distance and separation, we feel our 'two-ness' so acutely. More so now than ever, it is so important to remember that we are connected; we are connected with each other, with creation, and with God.

---

<sup>13</sup> Bourgeault, C. (2017) 'Oned with God'. CAC Daily Meditations, Wednesday, February 1, 2017. Accessed on: 30.04.20. Accessed from: <https://cac.org/oned-with-god-2017-02-01/>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:16

<sup>16</sup> Reynolds, S. G. (2016) 'Living with the Mind of Christ'. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, p. 7.

So let us pray that during, and following, this unprecedented season of history, we will grow stronger and closer, and that we will more deeply open our hearts to the truth of our sacred interconnectedness, with each other, with creation, and with the mystery we call God.

Amen.