

“I pray not only for them, 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 . . . 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 17:20-21, 25-26).

Jesus’ great prayer for unity at the Last Supper draws out for us the connection between salvation and unity. Jesus came to do nothing less than share the life of God with us, drawing us into perfect communion with himself and, through him, with the Father, so that we would be as closely united to the Father as Christ is. But being drawn into communion with God also has another effect: we are drawn into communion with each other. The greatest sign of God’s saving plan, then, is when we live in unity as brothers and sisters in Christ.

It is good to remember this as we marked a number of events this week that unintentionally served as sharp reminders of many things that divide us. This past week, our nation remembered Martin Luther King Day, and on Friday we witnessed the inauguration of a new president. While both of these events were actually meant to unite us as a nation - around the cause for racial justice, promoted so selflessly by Dr. King, and around the core principles of democracy, represented by the smooth transition of power in a presidential inauguration – our current national climate gives us pause to consider how divided we are in both of these areas today. Race relations in our country are at the lowest point in decades, and political differences between parties, and even within them, have hardened into unyielding barriers to any communication or compromise. The United States of America seem anything but “United” today.

All the more reason for us as Christians to remember what, or rather who, unites us; to intensify our efforts to live in peace and harmony with our Christian brothers and sisters of any race or political persuasion; and, by our loving unity as Christians, to reveal Christ and his saving, uniting plan to our divided country. Christ’s final prayer for us was that we may be one. Let us make that prayer our own, and live the faith it professes.