

THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE

Saint Paul's Cathedral, San Diego
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Scott Richardson +

Gracious God,

Let these words be more than words and give us the spirit of Jesus.

Amen.

Jesus prayed for his disciples: Father, I ask that they may be one. The glory that you have given me, I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one.

When I listen to my respected elders here at the cathedral, I'm often reminded that the Golden Age of Ecumenism occurred about forty-five years ago. Okay, I was nine – not really into it at the time - but it is important. Ecumenism has to do with the spiritual unity of the universal church. It doesn't mean that every denomination will meld into one but it does mean that we'll let our unity in Christ trump lesser concerns. As Vatican II unfolded there was a surge of interest in attempting to fulfill today's gospel. Leaders of various denominations confessed that the Body of Christ on earth, the church, had suffered a terrible fracture (several, in fact) and stood in need of healing. Christ's prayer – "that they all may be one" – became the prayer of millions. People from different branches of Christianity drew together to share practices, discuss theology, engage in social action, pray and worship. There was a sense of tremendous hope.

The vision from the Revelation of John serves well here; all the people of God gathered with angels around the Alpha and Omega singing praises in perfect harmony – no dissension, no dissonance. That hope, of course, was never fully actualized but gains were made. It's not an accident that Episcopalians and Lutherans currently enjoy full communion - part of the good fruit sowed and nurtured decades ago. And, obviously, we still have miles to go – apart from this victory and many others we're now as divided as ever before.

At the same time the ecumenical movement was gaining steam another significant vision was coming into focus for church folks. Jungian psychology made its way into our pulpits and classrooms. Saint Paul's was at the forefront of this shift. John Sanford, the rector of the church (we weren't a cathedral yet), and Robert Johnson, an analyst and author, led hundreds into discovering the link between spiritual and emotional depth.

In his memoir, Balancing Heaven and Earth, Robert writes, "My first joint venture with Saint Paul's in San Diego was to take part in a Wednesday night adult education program; this was so well received that it eventually became its own organization, the San Diego Friends of Jung... I presented my lectures as well as exploring other myths and stories and drew out their psychological lessons for modern people... It was at Saint Paul's that I developed my lectures on Parsifal and the Holy Grail legend. My first book, He, grew out of a series of four lectures... John Sanford had it recorded and asked the church secretary to type up a transcript. John then tidied it up a bit and sent the manuscript off to a small publisher... Surprising to all, they accepted the book... Before I knew what was happening, Harper and Row, one of the world's largest publishers, became interested and purchased the rights to my

book... it began selling in great numbers. He is now translated into thirteen languages (1998) and can be found in bookstores around the world.”

This morning I'm linking our gospel and the ecumenical movement and the influence of Jungian psychology because they share a common goal – unity. Jesus prayed for the unity of his immediate followers and future followers. Ecumenists sought unity in the worldwide church. Jungians sought personal unity, integration, and wholeness. Engagement was the key for all. The first followers of Jesus engaged the people of the Mediterranean world in the story of the resurrection and in its significance for each of them – the promise of eternal unity with God through Christ. There's no better model for that than Paul and Silas in Philippi, our first lesson. Ecumenists engaged one another in a joyful exploration of varied spiritual treasures. Jungians engaged willing searchers seeking healing for inner fractures.

The first followers of Jesus took great risks in their mission – most of them died telling the story. Paul and Silas take a beating today and still spend the night singing hymns and saving souls. Ecumenists took risks in their attempt to put aside the old ways that kept people of faith apart from one another and eternally suspicious. Jungians took equal risks but with a different purpose. They called us to examine our persona, the mask we wear in public. They invited us to befriend our shadow, that part we hide from the public and hope the world won't notice. Men were encouraged to explore their feminine side and women their masculine. The purpose was to bring opposites into harmony, to be individuated, mature, and wise. All of it – the Jesus movement, ecumenism, Jungian psychology – was and is today good and hard work.

Looking back, I wonder if the ecumenical movement faltered over time because outward unity became impossible apart from inward unity. I wonder if we left the open spirit of Jesus behind and shut down before he was finished with us. I wonder about the emotional state of some who may have been involved; if we haven't done our inner work then we might be more inclined to hold to outward form, to that which distinguishes us from others. This, at times, allows us to cling to a superficial sense of separation or, even worse, superiority. Distinguishing ourselves from others is an important part of the individuating process but there's a healthy and an unhealthy expression of that. I wonder if we ran out of steam outwardly because we were inwardly anemic.

But, more importantly and more positively, I wonder if this is what Christ means in his prayer today – that we might look for unity first in his merciful love, and then in the inward freedom with which he blesses us, rather than in outward conformity. His freedom expresses itself in a deep desire to engage the self and the other authentically – few masks, light shadows. His spirit of independence and intimacy allows for a true encounter, whether we're healing ancient rifts or divided souls.

And here now is some good news: we're as unbalanced as any other denomination most of the time but Episcopalians have gotten this part right from the very beginning. We are not one because we hold one opinion or endorse one set of practices. We fulfill the prayer of Christ, we are one, because, celebrating glorious difference, we gather weekly to kneel next to one another and say common prayers. May we continue to do so now. Amen.