



## **2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

Abiding in Christ is an inner attitude that takes root in us over time. It demands space to grow. It can be overtaken by the struggle for the necessities of life and it is threatened by the distractions, noise, activity and the challenges of life. We cannot bear fruit on our own. We cannot bear fruit separated from the vine. It is the sap, the life of Jesus flowing through us, that produces fruit. Remaining in Jesus' love, remaining a branch of the vine, is what allows his life to flow through us. By his word we bear fruit. As persons, as a community, as the entire church, we wish to unite ourselves to Christ in order to keep his commandment of loving one another as He has loved us (John 15:12).

Communion with Christ demands communion with others. Dorotheus of Gaza, a monk in Palestine in the 6th century, expressed this in the following way:

Imagine a circle drawn on the ground, that is, a line drawn in a circle with a compass, and a centre. Imagine that the circle is the world, the centre is God, and the radii are the different paths or ways people live. When the saints, desiring to draw near to God, walk toward the middle of the circle, to the extent that they penetrate its interior, they draw closer to each other; and the closer they draw to each other, the closer they come to God. Understand that the same thing applies conversely, when we turn away from God and withdraw toward the outside. It then becomes obvious that the more we move away from God, the more we move away from each other, and the more we move away from each other, the more we also move away from God.

Moving closer to others, living together in community with others, sometimes people very different from ourselves, can be challenging. Christ's prayer for unity is an invitation to turn back to him and so come closer to one another, rejoicing in the richness of our diversity. As we learn from community life, efforts at reconciliation are costly and demand sacrifice. Abiding in Christ, we receive the strength and wisdom to act against structures of injustice and oppression, to fully recognize ourselves as brothers and sisters in humanity, and to be creators of a new way of living, with respect for and communion with all of creation.

For the eight days of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2021, we propose a journey of prayer using scripture from the fifteenth chapter of the gospel of John:

- **Day 1: Called by God:** “You did not choose me but I chose you” (John15:16a)
- **Day 2: Maturing internally:** “Abide in me as I abide in you” (John15:4a)
- **Day 3: Forming one body:** “Love one another as I have loved you” (John15:12b)
- **Day 4: Praying together:** “I do not call you servants any longer ... but I have called you friends” (John15:15)
- **Day 5: Letting oneself be transformed by the Word:** “You have already been pruned by the word...” (John15:3)
- **Day 6: Welcoming others:** “Go and bear fruit, fruit that will last” (John15:16b)
- **Day 7: Growing in unity:** “I am the vine, you are the branches” (John15:5a)
- **Day 8: Reconciling with all of creation:** “So that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (John15:11)

+++++

### ***John 15:1-17***

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

*New Revised Standard Version*

## Day 1 – Called by God

*“You did not choose me but I chose you” (John 15:16a)*

READ: Genesis 12:1-4 The call of Abraham; John 1:35-51 The call of the first disciples

MEDITATION: The start of our journey toward God is an encounter between human beings and God, between the created and the Creator. Abraham heard God’s call to go to the land that God would show him. Like Abraham we are called to leave the familiar and go to the place that God has prepared for us in the depths of our hearts.

Along the way, we will become more and more ourselves, the people God has wanted us to be from the beginning. And by following the call addressed to us, we become a blessing for our loved ones, our neighbors, and the world.

In the Gospel of John, we hear God’s call in various ways. Touched by his love, we set out on the journey to him. We encounter him on a path of transformation-the bright beginning of a relationship of love that continually starts anew.

*One day we understand, without even being aware of it, that a ‘yes’ has already been inscribed in our innermost depths. So we choose to go forward in the footsteps of Christ....*

*In silence in Christ’s presence, we hear Christ say, “Come, follow me; I will give you a place to rest your heart in me.”*

*The Sources of Taizé (2000) p.52*

PRAYER: *Jesus Christ, you seek us. You wish to offer us relationship and lead us to a life that is ever more complete. Grant us confidence to answer your call so that we may be transformed and become witnesses of your care for the world. Amen.*

+++++

## Day 2 – Maturing Internally

*“Abide in me as I abide in you” (John15:4a)*

READ: Ephesians 3:14-21 May Christ dwell in our hearts; Luke 2:41-52 Mary treasured all these things

MEDITATION: When we encounter Jesus, we desire to stay with him and to abide in him: allowing time for the fruits of our spirits to mature.

Being fully human, like us, Jesus grew and matured in his relationship with his Father. Rooted in his Jewish faith, he may have lived a simple, anonymous life in Nazareth where the presence of the Father nourished him.

Meanwhile, his mother Mary contemplated the actions of God in her life and in the life of her son. She treasured everything in her heart. And, gradually, she embraced the mystery of Jesus.

We seem to require an entire lifetime—in order to mature and grasp the depths of Christ's love, to let him abide in us and to learn to abide in him. Without our knowing how, the Spirit allows Christ to enter and dwell within our hearts. Through prayer, by listening to the word, in sharing with others, and by living justly as God requires, we strengthen our inner lives and come to understand what God seeks of us.

*“Letting Christ descend into the depths of our beings ... He will penetrate the regions of our minds and hearts. He will reach into our innermost being, so that we will one day experience the depths of his blessing.”*

*The Sources of Taizé (2000) p.134*

PRAYER: *Holy Spirit, may we receive the presence of Christ in our hearts, cherishing it as we would a secret of love. Nourish our prayer, enlighten our reading of Scripture, and act through us, so that the fruits of your gifts can patiently grow in us. Amen.*

+++++

### Day 3 – Forming One Body

*“Love one another as I have loved you” (John15:12b)*

READ: Colossians 3:12-17 Clothe yourself with compassion & John 13:1-15; 34-35 Love one another

MEDITATION: On the eve of his death, Jesus, kneeling, washed the feet of his disciples. He knew the difficulty of living together and the importance of forgiveness and mutual service. “Unless I wash you,” he said to Peter, “you have no share with me.”

Peter received Jesus at his feet; he was washed and was touched by the humility and gentleness of Christ. Later he would follow Jesus’s example and serve the fellowship of the faithful in the early church. Jesus wishes that life and love circulate through us as the sap through the vine, so that Christian communities be one body.

But today as in the past, it is not easy to live together. We are often faced with our own limitations. At times we fail to love those who are close to us in a community, parish or family. There are times when our relationships break down completely.

In Christ we are invited to be clothed in compassion, through countless new beginnings. The recognition that we are loved by God moves us to welcome each other with our strengths and weaknesses. It is then that Christ is in our midst.

*With almost nothing, are you a creator of reconciliation in that communion of love, which is the Body of Christ, his Church? Sustained by a shared momentum, rejoice! You are no longer alone, in all things you are advancing together with your brothers and sisters. With them, you are called to live the parable of community.*

*The Sources of Taizé (2000) pp. 48-49*

PRAYER: *God our Father, you reveal to us your love through Christ and through our brothers and sisters. Open our hearts so that we can welcome each other with our differences and live in forgiveness. Grant us to live united in one body, so that the gift that is each person comes to light. May all of us together be a reflection of the living Christ. Amen.*

+++++

## Day 4 – Praying Together

*“I do not call you servants any longer... but I have called you friends” (John15:15)*

READ: Romans 8:26-27 The Spirit helps us in our weakness; Luke 11:1-4 Lord, teach us to pray

MEDITATION: God thirsts for relationship with us. He searches for us as he searched for Adam, calling to him in the garden: “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9)

In Christ, God came to meet us. Jesus lived in prayer, intimately united to his Father, while creating friendships with his disciples and all those he met. He introduced them to that which was most precious to him: the relationship of love with his Father, who is our Father.

Jesus and the disciples sang psalms together, rooted in the richness of their Jewish tradition. At other times, Jesus retired to pray alone. Prayer can be solitary or shared with others. It can express wonder, complaint, intercession, thanksgiving or simple silence.

Sometimes the desire to pray is there, but one has the feeling of not being able to do so. Turning to Jesus and saying to him, “teach me,” can pave the way. Our desire itself is already prayer.

Getting together in a group offers us support. Through hymns, words and silence, communion is created. If we pray with Christians of other traditions, we may be surprised to feel united by a bond of friendship that comes from the One who is beyond all division. The forms may vary, but it is the same Spirit that brings us together.

*In the regularity of our common prayer, the love of Jesus springs up within us, we know not how. Common prayer does not exempt us from personal prayer. One sustains the other. Let us take a time each day to renew our personal intimacy with Jesus Christ.*

*The Rule of Taizé in French and English*  
Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Great Britain pp. 19 & 21

PRAYER: *Lord Jesus, your entire life was prayer, perfect harmony with the Father. Through your Spirit, teach us to pray according to your will of love. May the faithful of the whole world unite in intercession and praise, and may your kingdom of love come. Amen.*

+++++

## Day 5 – Letting Oneself Be Transformed by the Word

*“You have already been pruned by the word...” (John15:3)*

READ: Deuteronomy 30:11-20 The word of God is very close to you; Matthew 5:1-12 Blessed are you . . .

MEDITATION: The Word of God is very close to us. It is a blessing and a promise of happiness.

If we open our hearts, God speaks to us and patiently transforms that which is dying in us. He removes that which prevents the growth of real life, just as the vine grower prunes the vine.

Regularly meditating on a biblical text, alone or in a group, changes our outlook. Many Christians pray the Beatitudes every day. The Beatitudes reveal to us a happiness that is hidden in that which is unfulfilled, a happiness that lies beyond suffering: blessed are those who, touched by the Spirit, no longer hold back their tears but let them flow and thus receive consolation.

As they discover the wellspring hidden within their inner landscape, the hunger for justice, and the thirst to engage with others for a world of peace, grows in them. We are constantly called to renew our commitment to life, through our thoughts and actions.

There are times when we already taste, here and now, the blessing that will be fulfilled at the end of time.

*Pray and work that God may reign. Throughout your day, let the Word of God breathe life into your work and rest. Maintain inner silence in all things so as to dwell in Christ. Be filled with the spirit of the Beatitudes, with joy, simplicity, mercy.*

*These words are recited daily by the Sisters of the Grandchamp Community*

PRAYER: *Blessed are you, God our Father, for the gift of your word in Holy Scripture. Blessed are you for its transforming power. Help us choose life and guide us by your Spirit, so that we can experience the happiness which you want so much to share with us. Amen.*

+++++

## Day 6 – Welcoming Others

**“Go and bear fruit, fruit that will last” (John15:16b)**

READ: Genesis 18:1-5 Abraham hosts the angels at the Oak of Mamre; Mark 6:30-44 Jesus’ compassion for the crowds

MEDITATION: When we let ourselves be transformed by Christ, his love in us grows and bears fruit. Welcoming the other is a concrete way of sharing the love that is within us.

Throughout his life, Jesus welcomed those he met. He listened to them and let himself be touched by them without being afraid of their suffering.

In the gospel account of the multiplication of the loaves, Jesus is moved with compassion after seeing the hungry crowd. He knows that the entire human person must be nourished, and that he alone can truly satisfy the hunger for bread and the thirst for life. But he does not wish to do this without his disciples, without that little something they can give him: five loaves and two fish.

Even today he draws us to be co-workers in his unconditional care. Sometimes something as small as a kind look, an open ear, or our presence is enough to make a person feel welcome.

When we offer our poor abilities to Jesus, he uses them in a surprising way. We then experience what Abraham did, for it is by giving that we receive, and when we welcome others, we are blessed in abundance.

*It is Christ himself whom we receive in a guest.*

*The rule of Taizé in French and English (2012) p. 103*

*Will the people we welcome day after day find in us men and women radiant with Christ, our peace?*

*The Sources of Taizé (2000) p. 60*

PRAYER: *Jesus Christ, we desire to welcome fully the brothers and sisters who are with us. You know how often we feel helpless in the face of their suffering, yet you are always there ahead of us and you have already received them in your compassion. Speak to them through our words, support them through our actions, and let your blessing rest on us all. Amen.*

+++++



## Day 7 – Growing in Unity

*“I am the vine, you are the branches” (John15:5a)*

READ: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:21-23 Is Christ divided?; John17:20-23 As you and I are one

MEDITATION: On the eve of his death, Jesus prayed for the unity of those the Father gave him: “that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe.” Joined to him, as a branch is to the vine, we share the same sap that circulates among us and vitalizes us.

Each tradition seeks to lead us to the heart of our faith: communion with God, through Christ, in the Spirit. The more we live this communion, the more we are connected to other Christians and to all of humanity.

Paul warns us against an attitude that had already threatened the unity of the first Christians: absolutizing one’s own tradition to the detriment of the unity of the body of Christ. Differences then become divisive instead of mutually enriching.

Paul had a very broad vision: “All are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God”(1 Corinthians 3:22-23). Christ’s will commits us to a path of unity and reconciliation. It also commits us to unite our prayer to his: “that they may all be one. . .so that the world may believe”(John 17:21).

*Never resign yourself to the scandal of the separation of Christians who so readily profess love for their neighbor, and yet remain divided. Make the unity of the body of Christ your passionate concern.*

*The Rule of Taizé in French and English (2012) p.13*

PRAYER: *Holy Spirit, vivifying fire and gentle breath, come and abide in us. Renew in us the passion for unity so that we may live in awareness of the bond that unites us in you. May all who have put on Christ at their Baptism unite and bear witness together to the hope that sustains them. Amen.*

+++++

## Day 8 – Reconciling with All of Creation

***“So that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (John15:11)***

READ: Colossians 1:15-20 In him all things hold together; Mark 4:30-32 As small as a mustard seed

MEDITATION: The hymn to Christ in the epistle to the Colossians invites us to sing the praise of God’s salvation, which encompasses the entire universe. Through the crucified and risen Christ, a path of reconciliation has been opened up; creation too is destined for a future of life and peace.

With the eyes of faith, we see that the kingdom of God is a reality that is very close but still very small, hardly visible—like a mustard seed. However, it is growing.

Even in the distress of our world the Spirit of the Risen One is at work. He encourages us to become involved—with all people of good will—in tirelessly seeking justice and peace, and ensuring the earth is once again a home for all creatures.

We participate in the work of the Spirit so that creation in all its fullness may continue to praise God. When nature suffers, when human beings are crushed, the Spirit of the risen Christ—far from allowing us to lose heart—invites us to become part of his work of healing.

The newness of life that Christ brings, however hidden, is a light of hope for many. It is a wellspring of reconciliation for the whole of creation and contains a joy that comes from beyond ourselves: “so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (John15:11).

*Do you wish to celebrate the newness of life that Christ gives through the Holy Spirit, and let it live in you, among us, in the church, in the world and in all of creation?*

*Second promise made during profession at the Community of Grandchamp*

**PRAYER:** *Thrice-holy God, we thank you for having created and loved us. We thank you for your presence in us and in creation. May we learn to look upon the world as you look upon it, with love. In the hope of this vision, may we be able to work for a world where justice and peace flourish, for the glory of your name. Amen.*

+++++

To learn more about the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the Sisters of the Community of Grandchamp who created this resource, please visit:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/ENG%202021%20Booklet.pdf>