



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Seventh Sunday of Easter, Year C, Intermediate - RCLB Lectionary



### Intermediate Session

Acts 7:55-60

John 17:20-26

### Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

God our Father and Creator,  
all of creation is woven together by your love.

Help us to live together as one family.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

### Opening Life Reflection

The focus for today's session is unity. Begin with a web activity using a ball of yarn. Form a circle with the children. Hold a string of yarn from the end of the ball and then toss the yarn ball across the room to a child in the circle (do not let go of the string.) Then have that child hold a piece of the string and then toss the ball to another child across the room. Continue this activity until each child is holding onto the string and a large web is formed in the center of the circle. Discuss:

- How are people connected to one another?
- How can we live together in unity even though we have differences?
- How are we all members of God's family?

Allow time for discussion. Although we are different from one another, we are all part of the family of God. Jesus prayed to his Father that we might live together in unity with him and one another for all time.

### Listening to the Word of God

In the first reading from Acts, learn how Stephen is strengthened by his union with Jesus.

Read Acts 7:55-60.

Allow for silence.

### Scripture Discussion Starters

- What vision does Stephen have?
- Why is Stephen persecuted?
- Where does Stephen find his strength?

In the gospel listen to Jesus pray for unity.



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Read John 17:20-26.

Allow for silence.

- How does Jesus pray for unity?
- Why does Jesus pray for us?
- How does Jesus want us to live together?

### **Scripture Background**

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings.

The first reading from Acts gives us an account of the martyrdom of Stephen. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, makes his persecutors angry by telling them about his vision of Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Stephen remains steadfast in faith while he is stoned to death. He commends his spirit to the Lord. With his final words he asks forgiveness for those who put him to death. Stephen, like Jesus is accused of blasphemy and his death closely follows the pattern of Jesus' death. This suggests that those who believe in Jesus will face the same kind of persecution.

The spirit-filled vision of Stephen brings hope to believers who are called to give witness to their faith in Jesus. In Stephen's vision, Jesus is standing at the right hand of God. This shows that God will ultimately bring true justice to the world.

In today's gospel Jesus prays for unity among all believers. He prays that all people may share in the oneness that Jesus and the Father share. This unity finds its origin in God.

The oneness that Jesus prays for is like a beautiful tapestry woven by God. We are the separate strands woven in and out, over and under to become part of one another and part of God. Jesus prays that we may be one in God as Jesus and God are one, so that the world may believe in the love that God has for all. Jesus wants the world to know that God loves all of humanity just as God loves Jesus.

### **Questions for Deeper Reflection**

- When do you feel connected to others?
- When do you feel connected to God?
- How can feeling connected to others and to God help you?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the Gospel in Life.]

### **Doctrinal Discussion Starters**

#### **Christian Unity**

Christians of many churches have worked to create a greater unity among believers.

Ecumenism is the movement to achieve unity among all the Christian churches. The Catholic



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Church teaches that unity is a gift given to the Church by Christ (CCC820). The source of unity is the Trinity, the union of God, one in three (CCC813).

The gift of unity does not mean the absence of differences. Out of our differences we come together as one, united in Christ Jesus. However, the one Church of Jesus Christ has experienced divisions and separations. These divisions weaken our witness as Christians in the world. Ecumenism is one of the four principal goals of the Second Vatican Council, and the Catholic Church remains committed to work toward unity.

- To live in unity, do all people need to be the same?
- How do you appreciate other people's differences?
- How can we work together to be one family in Christ?

### **The Gospel in Life**

Some children may be fearful or make fun of those whom they consider to be different. How can you help build unity this week at school or with friends?

