



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Seventh Sunday of Easter, Year C, Junior High - RCLB Lectionary



### Junior High Session

Acts 7:55-60

John 17:20-26

### Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Jesus our Friend,

you are always here for us,

even when we feel most alone.

Help us turn to you and trust in your love.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

### Opening Life Reflection

Today's theme is unity. To begin, invite the young people to reflect on times when they have felt isolated or alone. Discuss:

- When do you feel most isolated or alone?
- What helps you deal with feelings of loneliness?
- How can Jesus help you when you feel lonely?

Allow time for discussion. It is not unusual for young people to feel isolated or lonely at times. Inner struggles with loneliness and confusion are part of the process of growth. We can find comfort in our faith, which tells us that we are not alone. We are connected to one another and to God through Jesus Christ.

### Listening to the Word of God

In the reading from Acts learn what it costs Stephen to remain true to his faith.

Read Acts 7:55-60.

Allow for silence.

### Scripture Discussion Starters

- What vision does Stephen see in the heavens?
- Why do the people stone Stephen?
- How does Stephen give witness to his faith in Jesus?

In the gospel Jesus prays for unity. Listen to how God and Jesus are one, and we are one with them.

Read John 17:20-26.

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Allow for silence.

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- What does Jesus pray for?
- Why does Jesus pray for unity?
- How does Jesus describe the oneness that he wants for all believers?

### **Scripture Background**

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

The 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. Jesus 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**

- How is the unity that Jesus speaks of like a tapestry?
- When do you feel connected to others?
- When do you feel that you are connected with God?
- How does knowing that you are connected to others and to God help you deal with feelings of loneliness and isolation?

[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.

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

- Does working toward unity mean that differences between churches are unimportant?
- How can all believers work toward being one family in Christ?
- How can we begin to see each other as “brothers and sisters” instead of strangers?

## **The Gospel in Life**

This week make a special effort to reach out to someone who is alone.

