

## Episode: Unity with God and One Another

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In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that You are here, that You see me, that You hear me. I adore You with profound reverence. I ask Your pardon for my sins, and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

How wonderful it is for us to go with our imagination to the scene of the Last Supper, one of our favorite places. It was there where Jesus reached, if we can put it this way, the heights of divine revelation when He spoke directly to God the Father.

It is so easy to imagine the apostles: their heads spinning as they heard one profound idea from Jesus directed to the Father, one after another. The Lord said, “As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you.”

Those words overwhelmed the apostles: “As the Father has loved Me,” the Lord was saying to the apostles and to each one of us.

You want to love us with the love with which the Father loves You. And it is unimaginable to think of how much God the Father loves God the Son.

Then shortly afterwards, Jesus lifted His eyes up to Heaven. He prayed, saying, “I pray, Father, that they may be one, even as You are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us. ... Father, they are Your gift to me.”

By this moment, the apostles, at least the the more sensitive ones — if we can be judgmental — were beside themselves, perhaps ready to pass out. Just thinking, absorbing these incredible sentiments, this desire that we be one, that we be perfected in unity.

This was that great gift that God bequeathed to us: “That they may be one, even as You, Father, are in Me and I in you.”

We know from experience that this great gift of unity is not automatic. In fact, it is hard work.

That's why Jesus did not limit himself to saying: “Be united to each other.” He aimed us sky-high by placing this ideal before our eyes: to be united just as the Three Persons of the Trinity are united.

That is why during this time of prayer together, it can be so helpful for us to identify those attitudes that can get in the way of this unity.

Start with the family. It is of the utmost importance that each one of us in our own family, that each of us have this passion for unity: unity over anything else, unity and charity.

It is far too easy to disrupt that unity, for example by sliding into sarcasm, by speaking in an ironic way. We have to realize that there, in that family setting — at the dinner table, for example — we do a lot of damage when and if we roll our eyes, say something sarcastic, criticize that which someone else in the family has said.

This brings up this fascinating topic of the difference in temperaments.

Some people are extroverts, others are introverts. People have many different ways of being, different personalities, different characters. You have to respect those differences.

If we were to insist that everyone in the family — and, for that matter, everyone around us — should react, should deal with situations the way we do, we would be setting ourselves up for an awful lot of tension and a lot of disunity.

There are many differences in taste, and we have to respect those differences.

I live in a student residence. Not that many months ago — I'm still recovering from this bit of trauma — but not many months ago, a couple of us boomers suggested to the 20 year-olds in the residence that they really — we could not believe that they had not seen a movie, I believe it was from 1981, way before, almost before, their parents were born. We said to them with great insistence: “You have to see this movie.” Well, they finally agreed; they watched it.

The next morning at breakfast, the two of us boomers said, “So what did you think?” Well, let's just say they did not like it. These young ones have been weaned on video games, very fast-paced, very violent movies. They didn't like our movie. Well, that happens. Let's respect that, even if it does hurt.

One of the key ingredients to establishing the kind of unity we're talking about is humility. Humility and patience. Each one of us understands immediately instinctively how impatience — which arises from self-centeredness, quite often — that impatience can do a lot of damage.

Right now, we ask You, Jesus, to banish from our way of responding to different situations temper tantrums. We want to learn how to control ourselves, how to not lose our patience when things go wrong.

I recently came across a very delightful anecdote that illustrates someone who benefited from this kind of patience.

It turns out that in 2016, the number-one restaurant in the world was located in a town in northern Italy called Modena. The sous chef one day found himself forced to take care of the pastry department because the person who had been there quit without any notice.

So there's a sous chef making lemon tarts. Suddenly, he drops one on the floor and it smashes. I'm not even sure what lemon tarts do when they fall to the floor but, whatever they do, it did it.

At that very same moment, the owner — and also the award-winning, very famous chef — walked into the room. He walked into the kitchen, he saw the scene, he looked at the smashed lemon tart on the floor. Anybody else in that situation would have just gone into a rage, berated the sous chef, and all sorts of things like that. Easy to imagine. But this chef stood there in silence. He looked at the lemon tart. You could see him, you could almost hear his brain processing this event.

And later he explained that he was there looking and thinking to himself: “Why not? Who says desserts have to be perfect?” And so he decided to put on the menu what he considered to be a deconstructed lemon tart. And you won't believe what he called it on the menu, and you can look it up, it's still there. It is called ‘Oops, I dropped the dessert.’

Now let's face it, this is an inspired leader. He turned something that was a mess into something great.

God only knows and we ask you, Jesus, right now to help us because we don't know how many things, how many situations we can take advantage of, turn them around, learn from them, and — who knows — perhaps invent something brand new. Now, this is not a suggestion to go into the kitchen this evening and start dropping things on the floor to see what happens. But you know what I mean.

Going back to this idea of differences.

Wherever there are more than one person gathered, there will be differences in opinion, not only in taste, but ways of saying things, points of view.

In order for unity to be preserved, much depends on our attitude.

If we go into a situation convinced that our vision of things, our opinion, is the right one, well then we will bristle at any suggestion: that it is not really the best opinion. And then unity is shattered or at least damaged. And by the end of that discussion, chances are that there will be resentment, hurt feelings, even bitterness.

And just think of any typical workplace where, if the chemistry is wrong — if people have the wrong attitude — well, there will be nothing but resentment all day long.

Interestingly, a team recently did a study, contacting 500 executives. They asked for two things: they asked for a noun and an adjective. First of all, they said: “Give us a noun, the noun that you associate with conflict at work.” And the noun they chose was fight. The adjective, the same thing, was dysfunctional. Well, who wants to work in an atmosphere like that?

All we have to do to turn that around is to learn how to listen respectfully, to listen respectfully, to learn from others, to be open to learn.

My guess is that, some point in time, you have read that great book by CS Lewis called ‘The Screwtape Letters’: a series of letters from a senior devil to his nephew. The senior devil is passing on tricks, techniques, strategies to tempt his client: a human being.

At one point he says to his nephew: “Okay, so your client is there living at home with his mother. They eat everyday together. Everyday at the table, your client's mother raises her right eyebrow from time to time. Your job is to convince your client that his mother is raising her right eyebrow because she disapproves of the way he is conducting his life.

Do not under any circumstance let him figure out that she's doing that because her eye itches. As long as you can convince him that she disapproves of him, you have succeeded in introducing disunity in that household.”

That’s the devil's favorite trick. He loves introducing disunity.

Talking about attitudes, we’ve already mentioned the importance of entering any situation giving real importance to unity over anything else.

It is well known that men are born with what is known as ‘genetic dirt-blindness’. Men don't see dirt. You can ask a man to clean a surface in the kitchen and after 20 seconds, as far as he's concerned, you could perform open-heart surgery on that surface.

On the other hand, women see dirt everywhere. As one pundit put it, a woman could spend two hours cleaning the head of an electric toothbrush and still, after two hours, see that head of that brush teeming with bacteria.

Well, we have a problem here. If in a household, the lady of the house — as we used to say — if she puts cleanliness above unity, stay far away from that house because it's going to be a terrorist zone. All the living room furniture will be covered in plastic. She will be constantly badgering, berating everyone else in that family because the place is a mess and they just don't see it. Whereas if everyone in that household is saying: “What really matters is that everyone be here, enjoying each other, being a blast to be with,” well then there will be great unity, great peace, great charity, which is a wonderful thing.

You'll be interested to know that at one point, way back in 1935, St Josemaria underlined unity really without using that word. He said Opus Dei is not against anything. In the original Spanish, he said: “No es anti-nada.” It's not against anything. Opus Dei is affirmation, youthfulness, optimism, and charity with everyone.

That's unity that he's talking about.

There, in any given setting, if we're there affirming with our youthfulness, our optimism and charity, we will end up being a source of unity.

And we ask St Josemaria right now to help us to accomplish that.

One final image that can help.

There is a saying, a slogan, a motto of a certain branch of the military. Their motto is “Semper Fi,” which is shorthand for “Semper Fidelis,” which is Latin for “Always faithful, always loyal.”

Those soldiers in that particular branch of the military are notorious: they're famous for being incredibly loyal to each other. Semper Fi.

Well, we can make that our own slogan, our own motto. Fierce loyalty to everyone around us, everyone in our life, no matter what. Because that motto, ringing in our ears, will lead us to do whatever it takes to defend unity.

We'd finish by turning to Our Lady as we always do. Imagining you, Mary, during those first years, first days of the Church, being that bedrock of unity.

It's so easy to imagine they're in the upper room, all the first Christians gathered around you.

Then later, whether they were with you or at a distance, but still gathered around you at least in their thoughts, knowing that you were the source of such great strength and unity.

We ask you to obtain from your spouse, the Holy Spirit, the unity that will show the world that the Lord has indeed sent us and dwells within us.

I thank You, my God, for the good resolutions, affections and inspirations that You have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask Your help in putting them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel intercede for me.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God bless you.