

15 May 2024 - Wednesday of the 7th week of Easter

[Acts 20, 28-38; John 17, 11b-19](#)

Homily

In his Gospel, Saint Luke gives great importance to Jesus' long ascent to Jerusalem, where he will be judged by the Sanhedrin and then handed over by the religious leaders to the Romans, to be put to death outside the city. Similarly, in his "second book", the Acts of the Apostles, he describes Paul's activity as an ascent to Jerusalem where he will be accused by the same religious leaders of Israel, which will lead to his being taken in charge by the Roman authorities. This led to him being sent to Rome, where he was eventually beheaded.

The first reading of today's Mass describes his meeting with the representatives of the Church of Ephesus. In moving words, he entrusts to God this Church that he loved so much, and whose unity he knew was under threat. They all knew that this was their last meeting, and the next day they accompanied him to the ship on which he would begin his journey to Jerusalem, with many stopovers.

Our liturgical lectionary parallels this story with the section of Jesus' long prayer at the Last Supper, which we began reading yesterday. In this passage, Jesus prays to his Father to keep united in his name the disciples he has sent to bring the good news, just as He himself was sent to the world by his Father.

The unity of the Church, like the unity of every particular community within the Church, is a gift from God that we must ask for in prayer. The Protestant pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died in a Nazi prison towards the end of the Second World War, wrote an admirable little book on community life, in the confines of his cell. In it he says that when we try to build community by our own human efforts, we always fail. We cannot build community; we must receive it as a gift from God. But we have to prepare ourselves to receive this gift.

During this Pentecost Novena, let us ask the Holy Spirit for this gift of unity for our universal Church, and for all the ecclesial cells, including family cells, that make it up.

We celebrate today the memory of Saint Pachomius, founder of Egyptian coenobitic life