

22.1.68

Our Father.
(Expl. Rosary Chapel)

'That they may be one, even as we are one'
(Jn 17")

That prayer of Christ for his disciples at his last supper became the constant prayer of Pope John 23rd. It was on his lips as he lay dying; it was the goal for which he offered his life at the end. By his charm, character and personality Pope John endeared Himself to men of all creeds and none — he was responsible for waking up the majority of Catholics to the crying need of a more Christlike attitude to the other Christian churches; and being the sincere and honest man he was, he was also able to dispel a lot of the age-old suspicion and animosity of others towards the Catholic Church. His concern for the unity of the Church came from his own painful personal experience of the evil of disunity in eastern Europe and Asia minor — he was a prayerful man, with a deep sense of God's Providence guiding events, and of God influencing him through events and people. When he became Pope, he had the sudden inspiration to link his longing for unity with an ecumenical council of the Church. In his mind, the council was to concern itself, as it did, not with hammering out plans for re-union (that had been tried before, and failed in the case of the Orthodox churches) but

with the renewal of the Church's life and the deepening of the faith of Catholics. Only after this renewal would all Christians see, in the spectacle of truth, unity and clarity, a gentle invitation to seek that unity for which Jesus Christ prayed so ardently to the heavenly Father. This was Pope John's programme — and his successor has placed the restoration of the unity of Christians as his aim and the object of his prayer. But long before Pope John made his call for renewal to the whole Church, there were dedicated men who longed for that unity Christ prays for, working and praying for mutual understanding & reunion between Christians. They were often the object of admiration, ridicule, pity, suspicion or hostility, even among their own brethren. Now, reunion is the concern of the whole Church.

Of course, renewal and a change of heart don't happen overnight — it can be a painful process, and many people are confused and apprehensive. Changes, theories, talking won't bring about the renewal of the Church's life Pope John wanted. We've got to renew ourselves, change our own hearts and attitudes to develop in ourselves the mind and heart of Christ — to do that, we must pray — pray with the whole Church, and pray in the silence and privacy of our own individual lives. This week, dedicated to Church unity, is an invitation and opportunity to do

this with more than usual sincerity and conviction. Our renewal demands interior conversion and self-denial as its foundation: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; for the source of all our divisions lies in the disordered, ill-controlled passions of men. 'Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires'. With this, we can go on to live a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called, giving witness to Christ in the way we live. In these days of tourism, the cause of unity is very much advanced or retarded by the example we give to strangers, of a living faith. But above all, interior conversion and a really Christian life are necessary for all of us because the Church is a living organism, living a divine life - the goodness or evil of each member affects the others and redounds to the good or the evil of the whole Church. So we each have a responsibility for the whole Mystical Body, and so, in particular, for the unity of the Church. It's a glorious responsibility, but a heavy one too, for which we must pray for strength and perseverance. And in praying together we're encouraging or helping each other. How better pray than in the words taught us by Christ: listen to them now, say in Chinese, at the Christ of King Man here in HK. Last October

PRAYERS.