

Children of the Lamb  
(In Love 1<sup>st</sup>)

## LORD'S PRAYER

I listened, the other night, on the radio to the swearing-in of America's new president, Ronald Reagan, and his inaugural address to his nation: an occasion referred to by one news magazine as the sacrament of American democracy. But, allowing for all the publicity, hyperbole and hullabaloo surrounding the event, listening in did convey a sense of history, of occasion, of new spirit and hopes and dreams. And there were themes of the President's speech too, on renewal and rededication to ideals. It was quite a moving broadcast; and made especially so by the welcome news (finally) that Iran had just released its long-held hostages. I suppose the political and current affairs pundits will have their own (perhaps more hard-headed) reading of these events: and many non-Americans among us may be thankful that a conclusion has been reached in those two topics that for results appeared to dominate all the news. All the same, it is encouraging and up-lifting, something good to rejoice about and give God thanks for, to see and hear a country re-naming itself (at least in appearance), and doing so in prayer, thanksgiving to God, and in His name. The public occasion is a psychologically important thing — what results from it will of course depend on the efforts and inspiration it evokes in the people, ordinary people in their everyday lives. And that brings me round to other, much more quiet events taking place this week all around much of the world, when Christians of all kinds come specially together to pray and to keep in prayer this ~~special~~ <sup>annual</sup> week of prayer for Christian unity. The theme of

This year's week has, I think, a particular echo in the America events I've talked about — it could be paraphrased for those as One Spirit, many ideals, one nation. It's surely not out of place for us this week, to pray for America and its people that they may be renewed in spirit and in strength for service to the whole human family, at this grace-ful time of opportunity for them. For the Christian community of the world, too, we pray: and maybe need to pray with greater fervour and attention, just because we haven't got, or seen somehow to have lost a bit, that kind of euphoria, enthusiasm, inspiration that a special occasion can give. Year after year we keep this week of prayer: and it has been changing us, maybe not dramatically from one year to the next, but if you think back 10 or 15 years, then the change may be more noticeable. But, we're still so conscious that that unity we pray for hasn't yet come about in full and in the depths of our Christian faith and practice. This week of prayer is perhaps a kind of "holding" action, a periodic reminder to keep on praying and working: it isn't yet the grand occasion that would really give us a fresh start. In a soon-to-be-published English edition of a recent essay, the theologian Karl Rahner talks of a dream he's had, of a gallery of Christian leaders in Rome to discuss with each other their mutual understandings of basic items of Christian faith. He dates it in 1985. We do need to dream dreams, to see visions, to hope together, for our unity as Christians, as well as for the welfare of the human family. That's what our prayer this week should invite us to. So let us pray in song now the Lord's Prayer,

Lit. chants  
' Russ

It's version of it in Russian, from the Russian orthodox church MUSIC  
PRAYERS (leaflet)

"One Spirit, Many Gifts, One Body" — that's the theme for this Week of Prayer that I referred to earlier: a theme taken from St Paul's first letter to the Christians at Corinth. There were divisions in that community too, which was one of the points that St Paul was writing about, giving instructions to try to redress. He was stressing that it is the one Holy Spirit that is given to all who accept God's grace to be disciples and followers of Christ: that the gifts and talents the Spirit gives are many and different and not bounded by whatever we might think right, or proper, or suitable — or even genuinely His gifts. We, like the first Christian at Corinth, have to be open, to see and accept the many different gifts the Spirit gives, to discern His activity among people. And the one mark of that is that all His gifts and talents which we share among us have the same ultimate aim and purpose — the building up of the one Body of Christ, the one community of believers, reconciling all the natural differences among us. You have your own Christian gifts and talents, given to you for your part in the creation among people of the one Body of Christ to which all your fellow human beings are called to belong. What is or are the Christian gifts you have? How are you using them to build, not tear down or divide, to encourage and inspire people to come together, work together with hope, a vision and a dream, of unity and peace, love and joy among people around you, in giving praise and thanksgiving to God who is our Father?