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Joseph Scerbo

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Healing and the Kingdom of God

Joseph Scerbo, S.A.

Father Scerbo is a member of the healing community at the Institute for Christian Healing in Narberth, Pennsylvania.

"Your Kingdom Come," which is the theme for the 1980 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Jan. 18-25, deals not only with the painful realization that Christian divisions still prevent us Christians from giving a common witness in the world, but it also reminds us about our need to turn towards the risen Jesus for the transformation of life and the removal of the barriers that prevent the release of our inner selves into community and the world. As the Holy Spirit of healing removes those barriers and releases the gifts of the Spirit, the kingdom of God within us is experienced anew.

In Narberth, Pennsylvania, the Lord has raised up such a healing ministry, which has attracted professional therapists who are learning to integrate professional psychotherapeutic skills with prayer and spirituality. The staff at the Institute for Christian Healing is ecumenical in its composition. In a small brochure issued by the Institute for Christian Healing, there is a statement of belief that reflects an important dimension of the 1980 theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The statement reads as follows: "We believe that the message of healing through the power of Christ is valid for *all* of life, and we are dedicated to the extension of that healing within persons to the point of wholeness; that we are persons created out of relationship *for* relationship, and that it is God's Will to restore us as we come together and pray together for healing."

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a special time for people to gather and to pray together for the healing of divisions which plague the various parts of Christ's body and for repairing the brokenness which exists in our interior lives. As the Church is healed interiorly, avenues begin to open for us to give service to others and to share our lives with one another. As we are brought back into proper relationships and are healed, we begin to embrace our whole persons. What has been unappreciated, distorted, misunderstood is now seen as part of the balance which the Lord calls believers to experience. That balance on one level involves the spiritual reconciliation of all our inner polarities, for example, the reflective/the spontaneous; the conscious/the unconscious; the actual/the potential; the claimed/the unclaimed; the solitary/the relational; the light side/the dark side; the

weak side/the strong side; the creative side/the destructive side; the feminine side/the masculine side. The reconciliation of these dialectical polarities is part of the healing to which the Lord invites us as we embrace more and more of life and present one another to the Lord, allowing our hearts to say "Your kingdom come."

Evagrius Ponticus, an early Christian scholar, contemplative and Church Father, taught that the phrase "Your kingdom come" is already present in the previous phrase of the Lord's Prayer: "hallowed be Your name." The "name" of Jesus in the Johannine writings is not just a title, but rather represents an intimate state of being "at one" with the Father. The "name" denotes the very mystery of Jesus' person as Son of God, which is now revealed to the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through faith-experience in Jesus' name, all believers participate in His divine filial life. Perfect faith or "believing in the name" (John 1:14) requires constant search for and assimilation of Jesus' self-revelation as Son of God in such a way that we believers, in some way, become what Jesus Himself is, daughters and sons of the Father.

When we pray "Your kingdom come" during the 1980 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we are asking the Holy Spirit to draw us more deeply into Jesus' name and His at-one-ment within us. In the name, we find forgiveness, healing and the reconciliation of all those dimensions within us and within the Church that we have denied, ignored, misunderstood, or failed to appreciate fully. In the name, we discover the unity that holds together the fragments within us and within the Church. The unity to which the Holy Spirit calls us is thus truly a unity in diversity. There are many gifts, only one Lord.

The power of the name within us allows nothing in our life experience to be lost. The power of the name allows us to dismiss our false images of ourselves and draws us, through the divine indwelling, to reverence God's presence both in the human love we are privileged to receive and in the goodness of God's creation. To pray "Your kingdom come" is, then, not confined to one week of the year. Rather, to pray in that way means to have a continuous attitude of contemplative praise and thanks which we present to God in and through the ordinariness of our lives. The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us through our praise and gratitude. The Spirit reveals the light of God's inner love and gives us interior ears to comprehend what God's silence really means. The Spirit fills our being with love and helps us to recognize our kinship with all life everywhere on our planet. This year, perhaps more than ever, we will need to ask for the grace to experience the name in the still depths of our hearts and to turn towards God for healing. Most of all, we will need to keep one another under the name so that God the Father may give birth to the creative Word within us again and again.