



*I have revealed your name
to those whom you took from the world to give me.
They were yours and you gave them to me,
and they have kept your word.
Now at last they have recognised
that all you have given me comes from you
for I have given them the teaching you gave to me,
and they have indeed accepted it
and know for certain that I came from you,
and have believed that it was you who sent me.*

John 17:6-8

Central symbol

Tuesday 3rd week before Lent

The prayer now changes its focus to address the community. It is a reflection upon the meaning and nature of the church as John understands it to be. When he wrote these words, he would be thinking about what this was saying to third generation Christians.

The most fundamental thing in John's view is that this community has received, through its knowledge of the cross, the revelation of the glory of God as grace and love. This revelation is what constitutes the Christian community. That is why the cross is the central symbol of the community and holds that position in the architecture of Christian churches, along with altar and lamps as together symbolizing the Trinity.

The prayer goes on to recognise that this community needs help and protection. John's community was not part of the mainstream Christian church of its era but a group that appears to have kept themselves apart. The members of the community for which he wrote would probably have identified strongly with the small band of disciples that were weak and vulnerable, living in the midst of a hostile environment. They would have responded to these words.