

012708 3rd SUNDAY IN OT

“I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.”

Good morning. Blessings. Let us be united in mind and heart as we come together in this Liturgy today. Let us acknowledge all things that we have in common.... That we are all sinners... that we have a continuing need to repent and convert... that we are saved not by any of our own actions but by the mercy and sacrifice of Christ on the Cross – and that we are healed by his stripes and washed in the Blood of the Lamb.

Sounds like old-time Baptist preaching doesn't it? Yet – those words are exactly true – and still we have those who resist them – just as there are those who resist most every impulse for us to find all of the things which unite us.

I did a Communion Service liturgy on Saturday morning – and I preached some about the early years – the first 15-30 years in the new Christian Church... just years after the death of Christ. I talked about the struggles of the Bishops Titus and Timothy who worked with and under the direction of St. Paul. I talked about the struggles that Paul had with the Church at Corinth – and about some of his written communications to that Church and others.

Paul wrote telling these early Christians of the need to get in line with his teachings. It is said – and Paul tried to share this message through his bishops – that ‘TRUTH shall set you free. Freedom from division comes from truth – and truth leads to obedience. Jesus is truth – capital ‘T’ – Truth. Jesus is the Way, the TRUTH and the Light. He is completely and totally the TRUTH.

Now Corinth wasn't the only place where divisions sprung up. Paul wrote these words to the Church at Rome, *“I urge you brothers, to watch out for those who create dissensions and obstacles, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned; avoid them. For such people do not serve the Lord Christ – but they serve their own appetites and by fair and flattering speech, they deceive the hearts of the innocent.”* What does Paul mean when he says they serve their own appetites? They are self-seeking, and it would be a great loss, Paul intimates, if the obedience of the faithful would be diluted.

Paul concluded that letter to the Romans with a beautiful prayer asking God to strengthen the followers, saying: may you all be strengthened by my Gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ – to bring about the obedience of faith... and to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever, Amen.”

Paul taught the Corinthians – Paul taught the Romans – and Paul still teaches us today that division and disharmony hurt the Body of Christ.

In my early weeks here, I have come to meet with several parishioners – to pray with them and to listen to their stories. I have heard of the wonderful work of the women’s sodality and the many things they have done. And yards from here, many of the needy are fed and cared for by the folks of the St. Vincent de Paul facility. And I’ve heard of the hundreds upon hundreds of people who have received Holy Communion by Eucharistic Ministers who have visited the sick.... those with cancer... the dieing.

In listening, it is hard not to hear of divisions... of pain even here in this Church. Some extend this unrest even to our bishop or all the U. S. Bishops. For this body of believers – for any that have been hurt or had their God-given dignity insulted by a bishop, priest or a deacon – I apologize. I am sorry, and I promise you continuing prayers for healing. For those in this body of believers responsible for any division, may God who is TRUTH bring you to peace and reconciliation of mind and heart. We cannot let the ideal of the democracy under which our country was founded to create a vision of a total democracy in the Church. That cannot and never will be. We cannot let the world’s view of the politics of left and right separate us into two Churches – or worse yet Into many individual churches.

A week ago, we celebrated the memorial of Dr. Martin Luther King. And like him, I too have a dream. In this dream, all would be invited to come together to write a manifesto that documents each and every thing that we are in complete agreement in. We believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of Heaven and Earth.

And in His only begotten Son Jesus who is God – and we believe in the Holy Spirit who is God and the Lord and giver of Life... we ought to document our belief in the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist – Christ present in Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. We ought to document our belief that God's life was and is given and present in every human being – most especially including the womb of every expectant mother... and also in a person dieing even if they have tubes hooked up and in one who is suffering just as John Paul II suffered with dignity at the end of his life. We ought to document that we are, as the Christian hymn goes -- WE ARE ONE BODY....

And now when we have created this manifesto – I dream that everyone would be invited to sign it – anyone who can't agree to it would be free to worship in some other fashion --- but for all of us who sign it – then we should bring this document to the foot of this very altar – and then we should ask our pastor or a deacon to bring out the Blessed Sacrament for an hour of Adoration and Benediction.... And with the aroma of sweet incense rising before God – let us then pray for His mercy and guidance – and ask His help for unity and a new sense of purpose and amendment in each of our lives... in our families... in our community... in our country... and in this church.

Can I get an AMEN on that?

Reading 1

Is 8:23—9:3

**First the Lord degraded the land of Zebulun
and the land of Naphtali;
but in the end he has glorified the seaward road,
the land west of the Jordan,
the District of the Gentiles.**

**Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness:
for there is no gloom where but now there was distress.
The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom
a light has shone.
You have brought them abundant joy
and great rejoicing,
as they rejoice before you as at the harvest,
as people make merry when dividing spoils.
For the yoke that burdened them,
the pole on their shoulder,
and the rod of their taskmaster
you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.**

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14

R. (1a) The Lord is my light and my salvation.

**The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom should I fear?**

**The LORD is my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid?**

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

**One thing I ask of the LORD;
this I seek:**

**To dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,**

**That I may gaze on the loveliness of the LORD
and contemplate his temple.**

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

**I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD
in the land of the living.**

**Wait for the LORD with courage;
be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.**

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Reading II

1 Cor 1:10-13, 17

**I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus
Christ,**

that all of you agree in what you say,

and that there be no divisions among you,

but that you be united in the same mind and in the same

purpose.

For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers and sisters,

by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among you.

I mean that each of you is saying,

"I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos,"

or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."

Is Christ divided?

Was Paul crucified for you?

Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with the wisdom of human eloquence, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.

Gospel

Mt 4:12-23 or 4:12-17

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee.

He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled:

Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,

the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan,

Galilee of the Gentiles,

the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light,

*on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death
light has arisen.*

From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say,
“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers,
Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew,
casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen.

He said to them,

“Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

At once they left their nets and followed him.

He walked along from there and saw two other brothers,
James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.

They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their
nets.

He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their
father

and followed him.

He went around all of Galilee,

teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the
kingdom,

and curing every disease and illness among the people.

or

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he withdrew to Galilee.

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