

1 Corinthians 12  
January 27, 2019  
Mark Moline Sermon

In our epistle this morning we read Paul's writing: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." Paul then continues on to mention many different spiritual gifts that God has given the different member of that – of this - one body. It is clear that Paul is writing of Unity in Christ in today's Epistle reading. Unity not Uniformity. Unity in the midst of diversity.

Unity within a parish like Redeemer is indeed a precious much sought after, but sometimes difficult to attain Godly attribute. Have you ever known any parish in which everyone got along in perfect harmony? Why should we expect individual parishioners to always agree, --Afterall - When **the history of the church at large is the history of schism and severance.**

The Church of England got mad and left the mother church. Reformation is really just a pious sounding name for rebellion. The entire Anglican Communion is a splinter group in the eyes of Roman Catholicism. In time we became angry with King George and walked out on the **Church of England**, and then the Methodist left us. And by now I'm sure some denomination has left the Methodist. Where is the unity in all that?

I would suggest that we have a very full plate nurturing that good and pleasant unity right here at Redeemer. We do experience unity here, maybe not perfect unity, but this is a good and a pleasant place to be this morning. Christ's love is here - Still I don't think we've arrived – by that I'm simply saying that I think we need to keep working at it, - I'm not sure we even share a common definition of unity. What do we mean when we talk about Unity – what did St. Paul mean?

I draw my definition of Christian unity from John's Gospel when Christ prayed for us. He prayed, "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one." Then He prayed for us, "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word – that they (WE) may all be one." He concludes that prayer by adding, "Righteous Father I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them."

What induces this love driven Unity? Well let's go back to the beginning of this morning's Epistle! "Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." We dwell together in this body in unity even though there may be tremendous individual differences among us. Now what in the world do we share in common? Our Baptism in Christ, we are baptized in unity.

Peter Seewald, in his book "God and the World," writes : "Baptism is so much more than a ritual conferring membership in a community, as many people conceive it nowadays. Rather it is a process of birth, through which a new dimension of life opens out." You and I may live out our baptismal vows in very different manners. But we are both part of the extended Body of Christ on earth. We are one in the Spirit – we are one in Christ's love. That's unity!

This definition of unity allows for that oneness, as in one body, but as Paul notes, a body is made up of many parts. My foot is not my ear and yet they are one. Again - It's UNITY – Not UNIFORMITY. For us it's all in the love, John tells us God is love. You may disagree, but I can't relate love to uniformity – thus there is no room for uniformity in my definition of unity.

We don't have to always totally agree upon every doctrine and theology to – in unity and in the words of our baptismal rite - accept Christ as our savior. We do have to go to the source though. If the love is there, we can disagree and still dwell in good and pleasant unity.

What are your expectations for unity in your home here at Redeemer? Is it uniformity you are seeking? Do I really want everyone here to think just as I do about everything pertaining to us as a parish? That's a scary thought for some of my thinking is wrong. Is it possible that – on rare occasions - some of your thinking is wrong? Could it be – that for the sake of that profound unity – we need others to think differently than we do. Could we learn – could we grow in that struggle of difference? Is our faith so weak that it cannot stand in the face of other opinions. I'm not asking any of you to cave on what you think is right. Let me just say this --- that cross is not intimidated by anyone's right thinking or wrong thinking – even my own.

Indeed, How good and how pleasant when we live together in unity.

### 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.