

**The Mystical Body of Christ**  
**(3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C)**

**1 Corinthians 12:12-30—The Members of the Body of Christ**

<sup>12</sup> For 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.* <sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. <sup>14</sup> For the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot should 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. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should 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. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? <sup>18</sup> But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. <sup>19</sup> If all were a single organ, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> *As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.* <sup>21</sup> 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.” <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, <sup>24</sup> which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, <sup>25</sup> that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. <sup>27</sup> *Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.* <sup>28</sup> *And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues.* <sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup> Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? (1 Cor 12:12-30)

1. **Unity and Diversity:** “there are many parts, yet one body” (1 Cor 12:20)
2. **Necessity:** not have same function, but all are “indispensable” (cf. 1 Cor 12:22).
3. **Hierarchy:** hierarchy of spiritual “gifts” (Greek *charismata*) within the church:
  - 1<sup>st</sup>—Apostles
  - 2<sup>nd</sup>—Prophets
  - 3<sup>rd</sup>—Teachers
  - 4<sup>th</sup>—Workers of miracles
  - 5<sup>th</sup>—Healers
  - 6<sup>th</sup>—Helpers (Greek *antilēmpsis*)
  - 7<sup>th</sup>—Administrators (Greek *kybernēsis*)
  - 8<sup>th</sup>—Speakers in various kind of tongues (1 Cor 12:28)

St. Thérèse of Lisieux: During my meditation, my desires caused me a veritable

martyrdom, and I opened the Epistles of St. Paul to find some kind of answer. Chapters 12 and 13 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians fell under my eyes. I read there, in the first of these chapters, that *all* cannot be apostles, prophets, doctors, etc. that the Church is composed of different members, and that the eye cannot be the hand at “one and the same time”... I finally had to rest. Considering the mystical body of the Church, *I had not recognized myself in any of the members described by St. Paul*, or rather I desired to see myself in them *all*. *Charity* gave me the key to my *vocation*. I understand that if the Church had a body composed of different members, the most necessary and most noble of all could not be lacking to it, and so I understood that the Church *had a Heart and that this Heart was BURNING WITH LOVE*. I understood it was *Love alone* that made the Church’s members act, that if *Love* ever became extinct, apostles would not preach the Gospel and martyrs would not shed their blood. I understood that **LOVE COMPRISED ALL VOCATIONS, THAT LOVE WAS EVERYTHING, THAT IT EMBRACED ALL TIMES AND PLACES, IN A WORD, THAT IT WAS ETERNAL!** Then, in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out: O Jesus, my Love.... my *vocation*, at last I have found it.... **MY VOCATION IS LOVE!** Yes, I have found my place in the Church and it is You, o my God, who have given me this place; in the heart of the Church, my Mother, I shall be *Love*. Thus I shall be everything, and thus my dream will be realized. (St. Thérèse, *Story of a Soul*, Chapter IX)<sup>1</sup>

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C)**

1. According to St. Paul, what is the purpose of the charismatic gifts? Which of these gifts do you think you might possess, and how might you use it for the building up of the body of Christ?

---



---



---

### **For Further Reading**

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. Gerald Bray, ed. *1-2 Corinthians* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VI; Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 1999).
3. George T. Montague, SM, *First Corinthians* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010).

---

<sup>1</sup> St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux* (trans. James Clarke, O.C.D.; Washington, D.C.: ICS, 1996), 193-94.