

## Paul and the Unity of the Church (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A)

### 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17—Let There Be No Divisions among You

<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that *there be no dissensions among you*, but that you be *united in the same mind and the same judgment*. <sup>11</sup> For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. <sup>12</sup> What I mean is that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas,"† or "I belong to Christ." <sup>13</sup> *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?... <sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel*, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17)

1. Schisms: No "dissensions" (Greek *schismata*) (1:10)
2. Doctrine: "united in mind" (Greek *gnōmē*) and in "judgment" (1:10)
3. Factions: "I belong to..."
  - a. Paul: founder of the church in Corinth (Acts 18)
  - b. Apollos: eloquent preacher from Egypt, Alexandria (Acts 18:24-19:1)
  - c. Cephas: Aramaic name for Peter (cf. Gal 2:19)
  - d. Christ: title of Jesus, used as a name
4. Baptism: "Christ did not send me to baptize..." (cf. 1 Cor 11:14-15; cf. Acts 6:1-2)

### The Living Tradition

John Chrysostom: [A]lthough the letter be written to the Corinthians only, yet he makes mention of all the faithful that are in all the earth; showing that *the Church throughout the world must be one, however separate in diverse places*; and much more, that in Corinth. And though the place separate, the Lord binds them together, being common to all... "I say not then, (so he speaks,) that with Corinthians only, you being Corinthians ought to be of one mind, but with all that are in the whole world, inasmuch as you have a common Master. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 1.2; trans. *NPNF1* 12.3)

Catechism: The diverse liturgical traditions have arisen by very reason of the Church's mission... The Church is catholic, capable of integrating into her unity, while purifying them, all the authentic riches of cultures. The liturgical traditions or rites presently in use in the Church are *the Latin* (principally *the Roman rite*, but also the rites of certain local churches, such as the *Ambrosian rite*, or those of certain religious orders) and the *Byzantine, Alexandrian or Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Maronite, and Chaldean rites*. (CCC 1201-02)

Vatican II: The Second Vatican Council's *Decree on Ecumenism* explains: "For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help toward salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated

who belong in any way to the People of God.” In fact, “in this one and only Church of God from its very beginnings there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly censures as damnable. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church—for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame.” ...“However, one cannot charge with the sin of the separation those who at present are born into these communities [that resulted from such separation] and in them are brought up in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers.... All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church.” (Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3.5, 1, cited in CCC 816-18)

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

1. Does Paul view the church as a unity? In what does this unity consist? How does Paul’s vision of the unity of church compare with your experience of Christianity today?

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### **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).