



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
January 22, 2023

Is Christ Divided?

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

“You’re breaking the back of the body of Christ!” Saint Paul might have said this to members of the Corinthian community who rival each other, claiming that the leader who baptized them is greater than the one who baptized others: “I belong to Paul!” “I belong to Apollos!” “I belong to Cephas!” (1 Corinthians 1:12). This suggests that, based on the one who baptized them, the members thought of themselves as superior. Such rivalry sounds so petty. We should be careful here because some of this rivalry still exists in the Church.

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 8:23—9:3

Upon those who lived in a land
of gloom,
a light has shone.

1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17

I urge you...that all of you agree
in what you say, and that there be
no divisions among you.

Matthew 4:12–23 or 4:12–17

[Jesus said,] “Repent, for the
kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

In any healthy group there will be diverse opinions. We all have our own tastes, preferences, cultural habits, and so on. This is true in church music, preaching style, and religious devotion. The relative uniformity of the Church prior to the Second Vatican Council has given way to great diversity. What is different is not necessarily bad. Nor is our preference necessarily superior. Such diversity need not pit us against each other, but sometimes it does. Is Christ divided over points of preference?

We are all part of the body of Christ. We are all God’s beloved. The diversity among us challenges us to work toward the common good, to “be united in the same mind and in the same purpose” (1 Corinthians 1:10). Let us not divide Christ. +

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A Word from Pope Francis

What is important is the journey toward unity. It is very good that theologians study and discuss; that is what specialists are for. But it is also good that we...walk together on the journey. Together. Let us build unity through prayer, works of charity, and mutual cooperation.

Address to an ecumenical delegation,
Rome, January 17, 2022



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do you act toward someone who understands faith differently?
- Which religious voices do you listen to? Why?

Harmony

By Paige Byrne Shortal

Saint Paul's letters to the Christians in Corinth are also letters to us. In them, he addresses problems that were particular to that community; problems that recur down through the ages so that we can find striking similarities between the issues in the church at Corinth and those in a modern parish or diocese.

In today's second reading, St. Paul sternly corrects the Corinthians, exhorting them to cease their rivalry in the name of those who first brought them to Christ. He had heard that the Corinthian Christians were boasting: "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."

The significance of these divisions is both intellectual and social. Apollos, a brilliant Jewish scholar and engaging speaker, appealed to the educated members of the community who wanted a more sophisticated presentation of the gospel. The Jewish Christians from Palestine boasted of their attachment to Cephas, (the Aramaic name for Peter). The majority of the community were poor and less educated, and they tried to compensate for their lack of social status by aligning themselves to Paul, who brought the gospel to Corinth. Less is known about the "Christ party," but



some scholars think it might refer to the "Gnostics"—those who follow no disciple but claim to receive divine revelation directly from Christ.

Paul begs them to understand that Christ cannot be divided. He is especially pained because he himself is being used as a source of division, and so he asks, "Was Paul crucified for you?"

Saint Paul's letters are not just interesting documents for the student of church history. They are the living word of God and, properly understood, are a source of wisdom and sound advice for

the church in the modern world.

This is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18–25). Many Christians feel the pain of the division of the body of Christ and hear the call to unity while still remaining faithful to their home church. In my community we began an effort we call the Combined Christian Choirs—over one hundred singers from twenty-five different congregations, including Lutheran, Presbyterian, Catholic, Methodist, United Church of Christ, Baptist, and several nondenominational churches.

While theologians find the paths to unity and church leaders take the necessary tentative steps, perhaps we people of the Church might prepare the way by singing together. The beauty of the music is often in the blend, the harmony of different voices creating a sound that moves the spirit and makes the difficult task of unity seem not only possible but inevitable. We are one in Christ Jesus; we truly are. +



God of all people, open our eyes to see what we hold in common with each other so that we may build your kingdom together. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 23–28

Monday, Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children:
Heb 9:15, 24–28 / Mk 3:22–30

Tuesday, St. Frances de Sales:
Heb 10:1–10 / Mk 3:31–35

Wednesday, Conversion of St. Paul:
Acts 22:3–16 / Mk 16:15–18

Thursday, Sts. Timothy and Titus:
2 Tm 1:1–8 or Ti 1:1–5 / Mk 4:21–25

Friday, Weekday:
Heb 10:32–39 / Mk 4:26–34

Saturday, St. Thomas Aquinas:
Heb 11:1–2, 8–19 / Mk 4:35–41

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