

3 Sunday A

January 22, 2023

St. Patrick

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### **“Has Christ been divided?”**

The Apostle Paul asks the question that is razor-sharp in getting to the heart of the matter.

**“Has Christ been divided?”** Regrettably, sadly, we’re forced to say, “Yes.”

Last Sunday, St. Patrick’s, we heard the start of Paul’s Letter to the Church of Corinth. He splendidly compliments that church he had founded—and compliments us, too. **“Sanctified in the Spirit...called to be saints”**—Paul is lavish in lifting up their—and our—dignity, given as a gift in baptism.

Paul starts off with praise and accolades. Right after that, he blasts that church he had founded and with whom he had spent two years. He was furious with the cliques which had flared up in the community. He lambasts **“divisions and quarrels among you.”** St. Paul then names the problem: **“Each of you says,**

- **I belong to Paul**
- **I belong to Cephas**—that is, Peter
- **I belong to Apollos**—a slick preacher

There’s a recurring glitch here...the word **“I.”**

If a church is to be healthy and thriving, it must be a **“we,”** not an **“I.”** By baptism, St. Paul teaches, we’re all members of the *one* Body of Christ. We can’t be a hodgepodge of **“I’s.”** Rather, we’re called to be a **“we” in Jesus.**

A hundred and fifteen years ago, there was established in 1908 and continued every third week of January—including now, this week—what is called the **“Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.”** Centuries ago many of these **“breaks”** in unity took place. Now, within our own Catholic communion, strong animosity between **“sides”** tears at the unity to which we are called.

About three months ago I promised myself to make a time to meet with another priest in our diocese with whom I am at odds. We have different visions of **“church.”** There’s a stiff politeness, but there is a wall between us. You know, I haven’t met with him yet. This Week of Christian Unity nudges me to take action.

Recently our downtown YMCA was completely renovated. As you go into the main exercise space, on the wall—in the renovation, prominently placed—is the Bible verse upon which the Y was founded in 1844. On the wall, it reads Jesus’ prayer, **“That they all may be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me”** (John 17:21).

Amazing, isn’t it? Jesus says that **“the world will believe that you, Father, have sent me”** when folks see Christians as one. Sure, we can disagree. We can debate vigorously and passionately. But Jesus calls us to hold onto our oneness. That’s why the Apostle Paul soundly pounced on the early church in Corinth.

Yes, **“that we might be one!”**

Wouldn’t *our* oneness, if real, be a needed testimony in our world deeply polarized in so many ways?

*General Intercessions*

*January 22, 2023*

*Third Sunday in Ordinary Time*

**For us, the church, that we might heed Jesus' call to follow after him as "fishers of people," and truly show ourselves as his disciples; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**We are in the midst of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. For the healing of divisions among Christian communions, as well as within our own Catholic Church; and for our shared service of others; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**For reverence of all human life; that government and congregations provide quality housing, nurturance, and education for mothers and their newborns throughout their childhood; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**For all social ministry within our area, including our own parish's outreach ministry, as well as the Dorothy Day House of Hospitality, Manna House, and Catholic Charities; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**For the eternal rest and joy of all who have died, especially Eldridge Watkins; Will Duffy, at the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death; and all who have perished in the Ukraine war; we pray to you, O Lord—**

