

Pastoral Message from Fr. George for 8.4.23



This past Sunday our Epistle reading written by St. Paul emphasized a strong message on unity within the Body of Christ. Fr. George reprinted the following sermon from www.mystagogyresourcecenter.com by Archimandrite George Kapsanis, Former Abbot of Gregoriou Monastery on Mt. Athos as spiritual food for thought this week.

Holy Unity Within the Church

We heard in the apostolic reading (1 Cor. 1:10-17), which is from the first letter to the Corinthians of the apostle Paul, that the Apostle recommends to the Corinthians, but also to Christians of all ages, to be united in the Church with a unity not external but spiritual and internal.

“Brethren,” he says, “I appeal to you by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree.” He did not say this by his own name, but by the name of Christ, Who is the Head of the Church.

Let not one person say one thing and the other another. Let there be no disagreement within the Church, among Christians. There should not be different opinions and views and teachings, but all of you should follow the opinion, the teaching and the spirit of Christ, in order to agree.

“Let there be no schisms among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).

It is therefore clear from what the Apostle tells them, that he is not asking, as I said at the beginning, for an external unity, a forced kind of unity, but a unity of spirit, of spirits, a unity of hearts within the Church of Christ.

Not only that we should not argue with each other and not express our differences, but that we should not even have differences, being all in agreement with the opinion and with the will and with the mind and with the teaching of Christ. This will bring true unity within the Church of Christ.

It seems that at that time in Corinth the Christians had begun to quarrel among themselves, to divide into factions. Some boasted that they are in the faction of Paul, others that they are of Peter, others of Cephas, others of Apollos. And some said: “We are neither of Paul nor of Cephas, but of Christ.” And that is why the Apostle warns them, but, as we said, through them he also warns us today, that these do not belong in the Church of God.

In the Church of God, there should be no factions, cults of personality, leaders, behind which we cling. One is the Leader, one is the Head, Christ. And we all must have the mind of Christ, the spirit of Christ, the ethos of Christ, the teaching of Christ, the Gospel of Christ. And the more we genuinely have Christ, the more we unite and agree with each other.

But when each one of us interprets Christ as he wants, then it is natural for us to be divided among ourselves and not to have that unity of heart and opinion and mind, which we must have as Christians and which also constitutes the core of the Church of Christ.

Of course, it is difficult to have this holy unity, this “like-mindedness” (Acts 1:14, 2:46), which the Evangelist Luke tells us in the Acts of the Apostles that the first Christians had, that “all the believers were one in heart and mind” (Acts 4:32).

It is difficult, because our ego interferes. And yes, we are baptized, we confess, we receive communion, we pray, but the old man also remains inside us. And it is this old man who divides us in the Church and creates the schisms and the different understandings and the different factions, and sometimes makes us fight each other.

However, as long as Christians surrender to Christ, as long as they submit the old man to Christ and are renewed in Christ, unity comes within the Church.

Unity is of course a gift of the Holy Spirit. It’s not something we do. It is something that God bestows upon His Church. But we must work to be worthy of the gift of unity.

We cannot expect God to magically give us unity within the Church. If we do not strive to be worthy to receive the gift of unity, unity will not come and we will not be united in heart within the Church of Christ.

Let us all strive with the prayers of the holy Apostle Paul to reach this holy unity, which Christ asks of us.

FOR WHERE
TWO OR
THREE ARE
GATHERED
IN MY NAME,
THERE AM I
AMONG
THEM.
(MT. 18:20)



The mission of St. Christopher Church is to proclaim, practice, and preserve the Orthodox Christian faith. We welcome all who seek salvation from our Lord Jesus Christ as we reach out and witness His sanctifying grace. Our vision is to establish an everlasting Orthodox Christian presence for the Glory of God, extending His love to all. ***Thank you for helping us achieve our mission and vision... Christ manifests Himself in the ministry we offer in His behalf. Thank you for helping us grow and for your precious gifts.***



Teamwork to "save the day" and repair
leaking baptismal font



Newly Baptized with their Godparents



Devoted Friends who traveled far to join us



Eulogy for our beloved Eugenia



Final Farewell and Committal







Orthodox Christian PRISON MINISTRY



Prison Ministry Awareness Sunday, July 30



In July 2023 "Hands of Love"
will be accepting monetary
donations to benefit
Soldiers' Angels



Soldiers' Angels Outreach Ministry



Welcoming former and new parishioners



"Let's Eat" brings us together for food and fellowship



Christ is in our midst always



Help us pray for our brethren in need...
Join us for our August Paraklesis Services



So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

Preserve, Lord, the President of the United States, and all the other Civil Authorities enabled by the American people; save, O God, all Orthodox Bishops who rightly divide the word of Your truth, granting unto them spiritual and bodily health; be merciful unto this Christian habitation which labors for You; have in remembrance, O God, every priestly and monastic order and their salvation; have in remembrance, O God, both those that hate us and those who love us, the brethren who serve with us; the people here present; and who for any cause are worthy of blessing and have gone forth having empowered us, unworthy though we are, to pray, for them; have in remembrance, O God, our brethren who are in captivity and affliction, and show mercy unto them according to Your great Mercy, delivering them from every tribulation.

For You are the Fountain of healing, O Christ our God, and to You do we send up all glory, together with Your Eternal Father and Your All-Holy, Good, and Life-creating Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

FOR THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS IS TO THEM THAT PERISH
FOOLISHNESS; BUT UNTO US WHICH ARE SAVED
IT IS THE POWER OF GOD. (1 CO. 1:18)



A final thought...

*If you have time to worry,
you have time to pray.*