

September 13, 2022

Members of one body

1 Cor 12:12-14.27-31a

For as with the human body which is a unity although it has many parts - all the parts of the body, though many, still making up one single body - so it is with Christ. We were baptized into one body in a single Spirit, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as free men, and we were all given the same Spirit to drink. And indeed the body consists not of one member but of many. Now Christ's body is yourselves, each of you with a part to play in the whole. And those whom God has appointed in the Church are, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers; after them, miraculous powers, then gifts of healing, helpful acts, guidance, various kinds of tongues. Are all of them apostles? Or all prophets? Or all teachers? Or all miracle-workers? Do all have the gifts of healing? Do all of them speak in tongues and all interpret them? Set your mind on the higher gifts. And now I am going to put before you the best way of all.

We can take this text as an exhortation to do everything in the proper order and in the proper attitude. It is the Holy Spirit who wants to put everything in its place. He is a Spirit of order! So, it is not a question of an order that arises as a result of a certain scrupulousness, which can become oppressive; neither is it the mere observance of a certain discipline, however important this may be for an orderly life..... Rather, it is a spiritual order, which brings with it freedom.

Baptism now unites the most diverse peoples in a single body, which is the Church. It is not that the differences between nations are abolished, nor is it that a "standardization" or an "egalitarianism" takes place, as some ideologies have attempted to do. Rather, unity is established in the same Spirit, so that the baptized become the various members of a single body, which is the Church. The bond that unites all, with their differences and particularities, is the same Holy Spirit.

For example, it is a beautiful experience to meet Christians in Africa, who live in a totally different way and have their own culture. Nevertheless, we feel a bond that unites us: it is the Spirit of the Lord, who teaches the same truth to people of the most diverse

nations. In a way, the Holy Spirit overcomes the confusion of tongues at Babel, giving us a common language and a common knowledge in Him. It is worth clarifying that this unity can only be maintained if the Church remains faithful to her own Tradition and doctrine in her proclamation and praxis, and if the faithful are not confused by the spirit of the world.

This principle of spiritual order continues in the Church with regard to the various charisms and functions. It is therefore important to look carefully at how God has ordered the organism. In this sense, the comparison with the human body is very apt. When something is not in order in our body, it gets sick or is affected. It is the same with the spiritual body. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to how the different tasks are distributed and which gift God has given to whom. For example, it is very strange for the laity to take on functions proper to the priest, as, in fact, happens not infrequently nowadays. This disrupts spiritual harmony and creates a kind of disorder. Or let us think of liturgical abuses, which overshadow the inner beauty of the liturgy.

In order to move in this great spiritual order and assume our rightful place in it, we must listen attentively to the Holy Spirit, who wants to lead everything in the order established by God: The sinner must enter into the life of grace; for the one who is already on the path of holiness, everything must be put in its place according to the Will of God, and this is what the Holy Spirit does. He makes us discover the gifts that have been given to us to serve in the Kingdom of God; He inserts us into the Church of God....

For everything to happen in this marvelous order arranged by God, it is important that our hearts be free of any jealousy and envy, so that we can rejoice in other people's gifts and in no way envy them. To get rid of such feelings, we can practice gratitude for all that we have received, and humility of not going beyond the limits of what God has provided for us. The last phrase of today's reading exhorts us to aspire to the higher charisms: it refers to love.