

The Body of Christ

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Last week we spoke about how when the Lord became Incarnate and took on our human flesh, He renewed our collective memory of what life was like in the Garden of Eden. As He walked and talked with us some two thousand years ago, He healed our spiritual and physical infirmities, reminding us of the time before we experienced sickness and suffering. And the Lord also through His own example gave us an image of what man looked like before the Fall, before the knowledge of evil took hold in mankind and in the world which God had created so very good.

And through our Lord's coming to earth, we also received a glimpse of that Age to come, when evil would no longer have dominion over us and the entire world itself would be recreated, no longer subject to the chaos which set in through sin.

This glimpse of the Age to come was most perfectly revealed in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the One who St. Paul calls the first born of all creation, the first born of the dead. In the Risen Christ we see a little preview of those good things which God has prepared for those who love Him – those things which St. Paul says “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man” because as of yet “we see through a glass, darkly; but then [in the Age to come] face to face.”

And so in the Person of Jesus Christ we see not only our past – what we were created like in the Garden of Eden – but also our future, our destiny to be recreated as new men and women who live eternally in the presence of God, in an Age where sickness, sorrow, and sighing have fled away.

This is our hope – this is what we live for – to enter into the fullness of the Kingdom of God which is to come.

Yet, what about the time being? What about the time between the Incarnation of Christ and His glorious Second Coming? How are we to live now, in this period before the Lord comes back to put an end to sin, death, and the devil, once and for all?

Well, certainly we live in expectation. We live as children awaiting the return of their Heavenly Father, for we know that when the Lord returns all things will be set straight. Yet, we also live in gratitude even now because we have already tasted something of the Kingdom to come. We live as those who have already experienced in part that love which knows no bounds, that love which lays down its life not just for its friends but also for its enemies, that love through which Christ has already overcome the world.

It is these two feelings, that of expectation for what is to come, and that of gratitude for what we have already received, which are renewed for us each time we gather together as the Church.

Now we know that as members of the Church we have a special bond with one another.

And this is because each time we look one another in the eye, we are seeing a person who has already tasted that eternal life which our Lord came to give. Each time we speak with one another we are talking to a person who like us is awaiting the Final Day of Restoration when the evil of this world will be no more.

And so our common experience in Christ unites us in this special bond, a bond unlike any earthly bonds of friendship or kinship because it unites us together at the very deepest levels, and not just with each other but also with God Himself.

This unity is one of those great and special gifts the Church offers us, for in the community of believers all of the members share in the same reassuring gratitude and expectation that ultimately everything will be alright, if only we cling to Christ and one another.

And this is why whatever struggles we undergo in our lives, whatever evils oppress us, when we gather together as the Church of Christ we face those struggles together, bearing one another's burdens and thereby as St. Paul says "fulfilling the law of Christ." In this way we can not only make it through the sorrows and challenges of our lives but we can also grow closer to God and each other.

But the gift of the Christian community is not only about sharing our burdens and sorrows, it is also about sharing our successes and joys. It is about being excited together about the good things God has done and is continuing to do for us. It is about looking ahead to a bright future together.

Each of us knows that the feeling of true happiness must be shared with others. When something exciting happens for us or someone else, we cannot wait to share the good news. When a sport team wins the championship, the fans throw a parade. When the army returns home from war, the soldiers are welcomed as heroes. And when through the Church we overcome the challenges of the world, God is glorified in our midst.

And so in Christ our sorrows are mitigated and our joys are increased.

Now finally, brothers and sisters, let us recall one last thing about the Church.

Let us remember that it is through the Church that Jesus Christ still continues to make His presence known in the world, even after He has ascended into heaven, and even before He comes again in glory. St. Paul tells us that we are His Body, He is our Head. And in this way, each and every one of us, becomes the means by which God is still very much present in the world, walking and talking with His people as He had once done in the Garden with Adam and Eve, and as He did for a second time in Palestine with His disciples.

It is through us that the Lord continues to share His message of love, peace, and joy with everyone who is willing to receive it.

Let us continue our walk with the Lord full of gratitude for what He has done us, full of expectation for the good things of the Kingdom to come, and full of that brotherly love for one another which carries us through times of sorrow and enriches us in times of joy.

The Lord has made us members of His Body. He is living and acting with us and in us. Let us carry His message of salvation. And let us rejoice in His presence both now and in the Age to come. Amen.

Glory to Jesus Christ!