

The Church Endures through Us Being Many Parts of One Body

In this week's Gospel, Peter has a profession of faith declaring that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus then says to Peter that he is the rock upon which the Church will be built.

As Catholics, we have always taken this to be indicative of how Peter is chosen to be the first among equals, and lead the Church after Jesus' ascension into heaven.

Peter though like all of us will make mistakes; for he will also tell Jesus that he would not have to suffer and Jesus rebukes him. And of course, Peter will deny Jesus. But he will go on to do amazing things as he leads the Church, working with the other apostles to help the Church gradually expand. Here we are today, over 2000 years later.

I think it's worth thinking about how the Church though is able to persevere and keep going. Surely there is the Holy Spirit who is always there guiding us, but as we recently sang the familiar hymn "We Are Many Parts," based on the words of Saint Paul from 1 Corinthians 12:12, I think it's a beautiful way of reflecting on our Church as a whole, and embracing the true meaning of those words.

For one, the body has a head; and in our case that is the pope, but also our bishops who are united with the pope as the successors of the apostles. They are always guided by the Holy Spirit, and help us as the faithful to further interpret the Scriptures and Divine Revelation. The Holy Spirit has helped us to grow in deeper understanding of what God has taught us; hence over the years there have been so many writings and councils where the faith was more clearly articulated. However, sometimes there may be an aspect of what the Church teaches that can be a little difficult for us to accept. And in Protestantism, we've seen what happens; when there is disagreement, often that leads to further schism and a breaking away and setting up of a new sect. However Jesus did not say "Churches" to Peter but "Church," and as such I hope we appreciate Jesus knew what He was doing. Individuals within the Church, from laypeople to clerics to popes will indeed sin, and sometimes cause scandal. But in faith and morals, the Church does not err in Her teachings. This is why it's important to pray about those things that challenge us, to listen to the pope and bishops, to read carefully what our catechism says, and to think, especially about those parts of the faith that challenge us.

However, we are also very much a part of that body, and we share in the leadership of the Church too through the priesthood of all believers, through our baptism and confirmation. We are sent out, as I shared last week. And this is why it is so important to learn the faith, and make sure faith formation is truly "womb to tomb."

As I shared last week, Mrs. Kayla Rooney, our Director of Lifelong Faith Formation, has prayerfully discerned to take on a new position at a neighboring parish. She will be greatly missed. It has been great to see her though try to create this type of program here at our parish, with programs and events for the young and old, in particular for families and parents who are empowered to pass the faith onto their children. For all of us, it's important to strive to continually learn and think about the faith through prayer,

and through making use of great catechetical materials online and in print, and looking for other ways to grow in our understanding of the faith such as through small groups which will be forming next winter as part of the synod. We don't have to be studying the Bible every night, but looking for opportunities here and there where we can grow in the faith equips us to be fishers of men and build the Church. I am confident the Holy Spirit will help us find a great candidate who will continue the good work Kayla and so many others have been doing.

And lastly, this is the job for all of us - how do we go out and seek out people? This is not just the job of the pope, bishops and priests. Its what we do when we live out the faith through the example of love and hard work; when we talk about what we believe and why; when we use patience with others; when we are at times "counter cultural" because we speak out for the truth as God defines it vs. how society defines it. The faith should not be something we fear talking about but do so openly in word and action so as to win souls for Christ.

What a wonderful gift we have in our holy Church - but let us never forget we are truly part of a team to win souls for Christ, so may we strive to grow in our faith through the Church and help others to see the truth of Gods love and invitation to come, follow Him.

Have a blessed week,
Fr. Paul