



Christian Education

A series of Sermons and Occasional Papers
From the clergy and members
of Holy Trinity Church
Forbes Park, Makati

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Title: **"Together."**
Comment: Insert Comment here
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Readings for this Sunday:

First Reading 2 Kings 2: 1-15
Second Reading Ephesians 4: 1-7, 11-16
Gospel Mark 6: 45-52

"There is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all."

This week I prepared an entire sermon based, unusually, on the Old Testament lesson. It dealt with the importance of the prophets and the significance of the ascension of Elijah, which is the central story of the lesson. However, as I reviewed the readings for today, the epistle reading from Paul's letter to the Ephesians jumped out of the page and made me aware that this was what was to be shared here today.

"There is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all...."

These words convey something that is so often forgotten in the church- any church. For those of us who grew up in Western countries, especially the United States, the idea of the individual, the pioneer, the maverick, has been force-fed us since childhood with its exaltation of the personality and its rights above all else. Eastern societies may sometimes suffer from an over-glorification of the collective, as the

recent histories of China and North Korea will show. But Asia can also remind us of the importance of the community, the clan, and the family. It is that idea that Paul the Apostle is writing about today. His idea for the Christian Church was not a vague federation of disparate philosophers who ascribed to a similar school of thought. No, Paul's recurrent image is that of a body- the organism- a tightly bound, interactive set of parts. Each is important and has a role to play, but none exists independent of the whole. Such is the thought of the Apostle Paul. And it is still the ideal of the Christian Church.

"There is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all...."

Our Anglican Communion throughout the world is going through some dramatic changes. The ideal of international and inter-provincial unity is being tried by some who feel that the cause of unity is not as important as the cause of truth. But for the Christian, the two are not supposed to be in apposition. The unity is one expression of the truth. It is the lack of vision on the part of some that threatens this and puts us on the brink of a new Anglican world in which some countries, some dioceses and even some parishes will elect to "walk apart" (as the terrible new phrase puts it.) Like any divorce, this is a tragedy- not a wonderful celebration of freedom. It is a breakdown in the organic unity that is to be the sign of the Church's life in the Holy Spirit.

"The is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all...."

This parish has survived many challenges in its history. Part of the reason for that is its unity. Holy Trinity has been, for most of its existence, a church of friends where things are done in community, held in common, and enjoyed together. I would like to think that this is partly because of the mystical effect of our name: being dedicated to the mystery of the Holy Trinity itself- the sublime expression of God's being in relationship not only with the world He created but even within Himself in the bond of love. It is this that still sustains us in our witness to unity despite the

forces outside that would threaten to split us into factions or compromise the things we can do when we work together.

“There is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all....”

Paul tells us today how to maintain this unity: “forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” This isn’t easy. It involves sacrifice and compromise of the things that are less important than the real reason we are here- to show our friendship with God by our friendship with each other. It’s a jungle out there, my friends, but at least here we have an idea of how things could be and will be when the Kingdom comes and the Divine Will is done on earth as it is in heaven.