

We are all the body of Christ

Rev'd Susan F. Straub

'Waiting on God in the Eucharist'

Introduction

Today is the Sunday after the Ascension: Thursday was Ascension Day. The forty days from Jesus' crucifixion was ended. In that time, a transformative time, he continued to be seen by his disciples. Now the disciples enter a time of transition. They wait for promised power from on high: a wait of expectation. The gospel passage we've just heard is Jesus' parting prayer for them and for us. Yes, for us. "I ask not only on behalf of these (the disciples with him at the time), but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word" and his prayer was that we may all be one. Not as a one solid lump, as all 'one in solidarity' would imply, but as individuals of every time and place, each with our peculiarities, united by the love and worship of Jesus Christ – relating to each other in brotherly, sisterly love.

In remembering and showing love and thankfulness for **one** person, whether the occasion is Mothers' or Fathers' Day, or a birthday, a family maintains, or sometimes even renews contact, strengthens the ties that bind families together and, where those families can physically gather, a celebratory meal is part of the day.

Jesus' not only prayed for our unity, our belonging together, but also gave us the means of experiencing it, maintaining it and strengthening it: the very act that we've gathered together to do, the eucharist. This is the joyful meal in which as brothers and sisters, we remember and show love and thankfulness for our one God: God, our father, God, our eldest brother, and God, who binds us together.

John 17:20-26

Jesus prayed: 'As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us.' In the eucharist we're united with God as we eat the bread of Christ's body and drink the wine of his blood.

The bread and wine, fruit of human hands, are transformed for us through the power of the Holy Spirit into the Body and Blood of Christ. They become a pledge of the 'new heaven and new earth' (Rev 21:1). For Christ died not only for those who loved and love him, but for all. The reality of God's gift of salvation can be seen, heard, tasted, touched, and smelled in the eucharist. Then we're sent into the world. The more we are nourished by Him, the more we understand that we have a missionary task, in other words, what we experience is too good to keep to ourselves. We are to be 'acceptable as an offering, made holy by the Holy Spirit' (Romans 15:16) in order to be more and more 'one, in heart and mind' (Acts 4:32), in unity with God and each other. Why? So we can be witnesses and ambassadors of his love wherever we find ourselves, to tell of his love, to speak and act as he would, that is, in his name, so that others can experience God's love

Unity is not an extra: it's essential to what it means to be Christian. Did Jesus pray that we could all be equal to each other or that we should all be like each other, Jesus-clones, or even that we should like each other all the time? No, but that we should love one another. To come together to celebrate, whether we're here physically or joining on-line, leaving our differences at the door of this sacred place rather than our shoes! United in love, our mission, our meaning and purpose, is to show the way of Jesus, an alternative to evil, and to combat its acts of obvious or insidious harm. To show a love that doesn't demand or expect reciprocity, 'karma', tit-for-tat.

We are all, however we come, whoever we are, the body of

Christ. We celebrate the Eucharist together as a sign of our unity, joining with others all over the world. We belong to Christ and each other. We rejoice together as children of God the Father.