



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Third Sunday after the Epiphany (C) – 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

Focus: *The Body of Christ*

word of life

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:27 NRSV)

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, he addresses the conflicts and divisions within the church in Corinth. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are part of the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit connected them to the body of Christ through baptism. There is no exception. Everyone—Jews and Greeks, women and men, slaves and free, young and old—without exception becomes part of the body of Christ through their baptism.

1. *What does it mean to you to belong to the body of Christ?*
2. *Is the body of Christ a helpful image of the church? Explain your answer.*

This passage confronts individualist thinking and attitudes. No single part of the body is superior to another member of the body of Christ. No one can opt out of being part of the body of Christ. “On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect...” (1 Corinthians 12:22-23 NRSV)

3. *Who might be perceived as weaker parts body of Christ?*
4. *How are we to treat each other, as members of the body of Christ?*

If our human body has a tooth ache or a sore knee, it impacts our whole being. The parts of our body interact and relate to other parts of the body. This is also true with the body of Christ. “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:26 NRSV)

5. *What does it mean to suffer with other parts of the body of the Christ?*
6. *How do we rejoice with each other?*

This is the bottom line: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:27 NRSV) This cannot be repeated enough. Because of the power of sin, our human tendency is to seek ways to elevate ourselves over others. Too often we prefer not to associate ourselves with those who are suffering or appear to be inferior. Paul says, “Enough!” Not only are we to offer our gifts for the common good, we are to support each other in creating a healthy body of Christ—a body where all are cared for and all have gifts to contribute. No one person has all gifts.

It is God who appoints the apostles, prophets, teachers, and others with gifts.

By the end of chapter 12, Paul encourages Christians to strive and seek a still more excellent way – the way of love described in 1 Corinthians 13. In reality, to not promote oneself, but rather accept one’s place within the body of Christ runs countercultural. Each of us is not only called to contribute our own gift for the good of all, but we are to find ways to support each other.

7. *What would it be like to not be with other Christians?*

Word among

There is a classic church camp skit where campers are assigned to play different parts of a human body. The skit begins in the middle of the night with the entire body sleeping, even snoring. Eventually, the bladder wakes up and tries to convince the other parts of the body to wake up and walk to the restroom. The complaining begins. The legs have hiked too many miles and need sleep. Likewise, the eyes are tired. Soon the ears get upset with all the noise. And so it goes, until all the parts of the body are arguing with each other.

Eventually, the members of the body realize if they work together and head to the restroom, all will be able to return to sleep. All gain when they work together, and the needs of the body are met.

1. *Can you relate to this skit?*
2. *Give an example when the parts of your body just don't cooperate with each other.*

Apostle Paul invites us to see ourselves as individuals with gifts, but at the same time, part of the body of Christ. When one part of the church is excluded, ridiculed, or considered inferior, the entire body is impacted. Paul encourages us to find the ways to work together, so that the body of Christ does not fight itself. All are needed.

3. *List reasons why some people drop out of church.*
4. *How does losing members affect the body which is the church?*
5. *How does it feel when people drop out of church?*
6. *What might be done to encourage people to continue to be active members of your church?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people

Paul understands a Christian does not live in isolation but is part of the body of Christ, manifested in both a local and global community. Each of us is connected by the Holy Spirit to the body of Christ. In the waters of baptism, we are made a part of the body of Christ.

7. *Based on 1 Corinthians 12, can a Christian be a Christian in isolation? Explain your answer.*
8. *What is lost when a person leaves the church?*

Living among God's faithful people is part of living out our baptism. God gives us the gift of others to stand with us in our hour of suffering as well as to dance with us in moments of joy. It is not intended that we go through the trials and tribulations of this world alone.

That does not mean the church is a perfect entity without its own share of strife. But the goal is unity, a single undivided body of Christ where all contribute to the overall health and vitality of the church. Like any living organism, sometimes poison can spread within a healthy body. Poison includes jealousy, false teaching, flaunting of gifts, and strife.

9. *What is the best way to address strife within the body of Christ?*
10. *What happens when we view and treat each other as part of the same body of Christ?*

Prayer

Gracious God, through baptism you have claimed us as part of the body of Christ. Stir us to offer our best to build up the body of Christ. Amen

last word

This week, thank ten people for being part of the body of Christ.

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