



THE YEAR OF ST. PAUL

ST. PAUL & THE EUCHARIST

Seventh in a Series

June 14, 2009

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body.... God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.

1 Corinthians 12: 12-20, 26-27

We are Christ's Body

It is in St. Paul, not the Gospels, that we find the earliest account of the Lord's Supper. Writing to the Christian community at Corinth, St. Paul reminded them that the bread and wine shared in the Eucharistic celebration are no ordinary food, but the very body and blood of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:23-28). To share in this feast is to profess our faith in the Lord who died, who rose, and who will come again. And it is more: in receiving the body of Christ, we become the body of Christ. We are incorporated into him.

The passage quoted above occurs just a few verses after that first account of the Lord's Supper. Paul, speaking to the troubled Corinthians, shows that division in a Christian community is unthinkable, even absurd. It is as if the foot or the hand, the eye or the ear, were to declare its independence from the body! All the parts are necessary; every member is there by God's plan. Our successes and failures, our joys and our sorrows, are not given to us alone; they are shared by the whole body.

For St. Paul, this image of the body is more than a simile for the Christian community. "*You are Christ's body,*" he says. In receiving the Eucharist, we become part of Christ's body, and that means we become part of each other. As Pope Benedict XVI has written: "Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians. We become 'one



body,' completely joined in a single existence. Love of God and love of neighbor are now truly united.... Eucharistic communion includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented." (*Deus Caritas Est*, 14)
—Corinna Laughlin

Prayer for the Year of St. Paul

Glorious Saint Paul,
Apostle to the Gentiles,
when the Lord called, you answered,
and you spread the good news of the Gospel
to the very ends of the earth.
Pray for us, that we may serve Christ as you did:
proclaiming the name of Jesus
in good times and bad,
when convenient and when inconvenient.
Pray for us, that we may welcome
all the people we meet
with compassionate hearts and open minds.
Pray for us, that Christ may live in us as he lived in you.
We pray in the name of the One
who is your Lord and ours,
Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.

Novena in Honor of St. Paul

We will conclude this Year of St. Paul with a special novena of prayer, beginning Saturday, June 20 and concluding on the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Monday, June 29. All Masses during the novena will conclude with a special procession to the place of prayer in honor of St. Paul.