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Year B Proper 13
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, August 2, 2015

St. James, St. James

Collect
Ephesians 4:1-16

Unity in Christ

I am very grateful to the kind people of St. James and to Raewynne for allowing me to be here with you these past few months during this portion of my formation process. Your willingness to be part of something new, your prayers of support, positive feedback, and constructive comments are deeply appreciated. I sincerely thank all of you.

take out percolator

When I make a cup of coffee each morning, I use a percolator. The percolator is made up of several parts:

- the pot
- the top
- the basket
- the lid to the basket
- the stem
- the electric cord

Demonstrate how goes together, point out each part and what its function is.

To make a cup of coffee, which part is the most important?

They all are. You need every single part, working together, to make that cup of coffee.

In the Letter to the Ephesians, Paul describes various gifts Christ has given people. His letter was written to the church communities of Ephesus, early churches which were struggling with the proper integration of Jews and Gentiles. Previously enemies, these two diverse groups of people were brought together by the Spirit of Christ in common worship. Paul's letter is to help guide the proper integration of Jews and Gentiles into the Church, maintaining Christianity's identity as Israel's heir while respecting the gifts the Gentiles had to offer. Paul's emphasis on "one" seven times: one body, one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all tries to redirect the divisiveness within the community.

As the church, the community of believers, grew, so did issues and problems. Paul, in his letter to the churches at Ephesus, is explaining the church, the community of believers, is the Body of Christ. The unity of the church is essential. Unity not meaning uniformity, but that every person, every part of the Body of Christ, has different gifts, different functions, all from the same spirit, which should be used for the good of the whole body. Not one gift, not one person, is better than another.

Paul outlines some of the gifts given to the people within the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. These gifts are diverse, the people are diverse, yet all are to work together to build up the body of Christ.

The Body of Christ is a model of unity which is constituted by diversity. Jew and Gentile, various gifts. The individual isn't to be lost, the individual and their gifts are to be honored, valued, and used to grow the church.

Each and every person is needed for the growth of the church.

Going back to the coffee pot – we need each part, with its own diverse gift, to function properly to make a pot of coffee.

If we think about it, if all of us were the same, and had the same gift, it would be kind of boring. There is a beauty to diversity. Before this worship service Raewynne and Joan were admiring the altar flowers: various colors, shapes and textures arranged into a vase of beauty for all of us to admire and to appreciate.

The Unity of the body of Christ is a growth process, a unity to be attained and to be maintained.

The goal is the maturity of the church, a corporate maturity: for the individual as part of the body of Christ, and for that body of Christ.

We recognize our limitations as humans to do this on our own. It is only through giving up of self, to Christ, that we can begin to be the people Christ wants us to be. In our Collect today we confess to Christ we need His help.

Life in Christ isn't stagnant. It's a growth process. All around us this summer season, we see gardens overflowing with flowers. Each flower has grown, has made a change. The change is an action. Growth to maturity into the body of Christ takes change, in each and every one of us.

Faith should cause action, it should change us, it will be a catalyst for growth.

The Eucharistic prayer asks that through the grace of the Holy Communion we be made one body with Christ. Opening ourselves to Christ, we can be changed as individuals by the body and blood of Christ we receive. We as a church community will then grow also.

As we leave the church service today, let us be who we are: the body of Christ in the world today. In our Sending Out, we ask God to send us out to do the work He has given us to do. To do this, we remember we are His in the World.

Let us appreciate the gifts in each other which have been given for the greater good. And let us have the courage and grace to use the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit for the common good.