



July 3rd, 2022 • Baptism • Holy Communion • In-Person and Online Worship

“What a Special Day”

Homily by Rev. Patricia Farris

1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 12:12-14

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.

As a Christian family, we are blessed this Sunday to participate together in both our sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. The sacraments invite us to re-affirm our identity as a beloved Child of God sharing community all together in the Body of Christ.

You heard it clearly in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth that Michael read for us. And remember, that newly forming church that Paul was writing to was a very diverse congregation. Corinth was a large, prospering urban center. Its population was ethnically, culturally, economically and religiously diverse. Rival groups were jockeying for control. People talked past each other and were suspicious of any who were “different.” The disadvantaged were often relegated to the margins. Sound at all familiar to us?

Paul was teaching them a profound truth about who we are in Christ, a truth just as hard to hear and live into in the year 54 as it is now, almost 2,000 years later. He wrote:

“Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread...For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” Baptized into one body. One bread, one body as we will sing together.

One. As a church, sometimes even in this congregation, though I’m speaking more broadly now, it’s still far from easy to live into the depth, the richness, the complexity, the gift—of this unity, to let unity be the hallmark, the sign, of life in Christ.

What a message to hear on this July 4th Weekend, when, as a nation, we continue to strive to live into our identity as a diverse people united around ideals of refuge, hospitality, respect for the stranger, and care of the least and the lost.

I’m grateful to our choir for singing for us this morning an anthem based on the text of Emma Lazarus’ ever-compelling poem inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty, written in 1883, not long after the Civil War:

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Tired, poor, homeless, tempest-tost, yearning to breathe free. We can read about them still in the news of every day, here and around the world. Do we hear them—men, women, children? Each created in the image of God, as is each and every one of us. Each beloved of God, each created in the image of God, taught Rabbi Akiva, a Jewish scholar who lived around the time Paul was writing to the church in Corinth.

How might we open our hearts to embrace them as children of God, and together forge a new, deeper, more faithful unity?

How might we "lift our lamp" of welcome, of love, of hope for one and all? For as the poet Rumi wrote, Rumi—the 13th century Sufi mystic born in Afghanistan, "The lamps may be different but the light is the same."

For us Christians, baptism carries a divine call to be part of God's mighty acts of salvation in the world, to move toward healing the fragmentation, brokenness and sin in our lives and in the world. As baptized Christians it is our vocation to be bearers of light and hope and justice and freedom for all. And at Christ's holy table, we are profoundly reminded of the unity that embraces us all. One bread, one body. One in ministry to all the world.

May God call us this day deeper into our true vocation and guide our steps on the path of love.

AMEN

Notes:

Yehiel E. Poupko. "An attack on God's image." *The Christian Century*. June 15, 2022.

The Rumi Collection. Shambhala Publications, 2005.

Mark A. Fowler. *Mentoring Into Vocation: Touchstones for the Journey*. 2010: Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church.