

1. Unity is a reality that is ours because we have been brought into the communion of the Trinity

John 17:21

May all be one! As you, Father, are in me and I in you, may they also be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." Often the words "may all be one" are construed as a command to be put into practice. But they express first of all the gift that Christ gives to humankind: he bears us within himself; he brings us with himself into the communion of the Holy Trinity; he makes us "sharers in the divine nature." He does not only pray that all may be one but that they may be one "in us".

the "us" is the Trinity. We need to understand the loving community of the Trinity: *Each Person of the Trinity relates to the others in harmony, submission, honor — agape love. The Son is submitted to the will of the Father. The Father has entrusted all authority to the Son. The Son departed to make room for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not draw attention to Himself, but to the Son. There is no dishonor, competition, jealousy or unkindness among them. The Persons of the Trinity would simply not tolerate it.*

~George Miley

"Jesus came to reveal to humanity that God is not a solitary, eternal being, contemplating his own glory; he is not just an extraordinary Creator of a beautiful yet painful universe. God is a family of three; three persons in communion one with another, giving themselves totally one to another, each one relative to the other. And God created man and woman as a sign of the Trinity, he created them to be in communion, one with the other, in this way reflecting his Love. God yearns for community to be a sign of this communion between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

~Jean Vanier

"Beyond human and natural bonds, already so close and so strong, there is discerned the light of faith a new model of the unity of the human race, which must ultimately inspire solidarity. This supreme model of unity, which is a reflection of the intimate life of God, one God in three persons, is what we Christians mean by the word 'communion'.

~John Paul II, Encyclical Letter

Ephesians 4

"you were called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly you have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness."

Romans 12:5

"Although we are many, as he says in his letter to the Romans, we are one body in Christ. All of us are members of one another."

Acts 2:42-47 What was the greatest sign/ miracle of the beginning of the Church? tongues of fire? speaking in tongues? Peter standing up boldly to preach the Gospel and 3000 believed and baptized that day? Peter and John healing the man crippled from birth and preaching the Gospel again and 5000 believing? I am convinced the greatest miracle was the fact that in Christ they became reconciled and one.

- The Believers were one in heart and mind and shared everything (Acts 4:32) right from the start the believers were reconciled and united in Christ, Jew and Greek, slave and free, poor and rich, would worship together, learn to love one another, and learn to deal with difficulties arising out of their diverse social, cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds."

~David Bosch ('Transforming Mission', pg 477)

2. Division is a reality because of sin, primarily hostility and violence

- God created man—male and female—like Him. Human beings are designed for relational harmony with other persons—God, and fellow humans. Here God’s pattern is unveiled for marriage, family, society, Church. Relational oneness with God actualizes relational oneness with others. Harmonious relationships are deeply and beautifully fulfilling for every person. *Genesis 1:26-27; 2:24*
- But we violated our relational oneness with God. For the first time personal relationship was broken. Pervasively damaged by being separate from God, humans chose alienation from each other. Relational violations came to permeate human life—in marriages, families, neighborhoods, societies and nations. They found their way into in the story of Israel. Division came to characterize the Church. And God wept.
 - "Reconciliation," however, belongs to the sphere of personal relationships, and ours is an age which is acutely aware of the alienation between people which exists at every level. Ours is an age hungry for the healing of broken relationships.

3. Reconciliation is a gift from God through Jesus but also must be something we must choose

- In Ephesians 4:3: Paul calls us to the urgency of unity “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” This phrase can be rendered “take pains to keep the unity!” It calls forth painstaking effort and passion of the whole person, mind, emotions, and physical strength.
 - *“Make the unity of the Body of Christ your passionate concern.*
- *“The good news for the church, Christ’s church is that the unity God desires is a work that God will carry out. Obligated as we are to work toward it, we cannot make it happen; that’s the Holy Spirit’s job. But we can be confident that it **will** come to pass, because God has planned it, and God is faithful”*
~Nighswander
- *“Unity always begins with Christ, but it demands our personal conversion to unity. Conversion to communion is a daily cross that we must bear so that the Church will be the unifying leaven of the whole human race.”*
~Cardinal Leonardo Sandri

4. Where there is unity and Oneness God commands his Shalom (Psalm 133), Jesus is made visible, the Gospel audible and hope arises for a way to heal all division and wounds in the world

- There were periods in history when, in the name of the truth of the Gospel, Christians became divided. Today, on behalf of the truth of the Gospel, we would like to do everything possible to become reconciled. We cannot pass on Christ’s message to those around us unless we are together. When Christians are separated their message becomes inaudible. The communion between us Christians may allow God’s Word to speak to people today. **Let us dare to head towards visible unity.**
- *“The same glory you gave me, I gave them, so they’ll be as unified and together as we are—I in them and you in me. then they’ll be mature in this oneness, and give the godless world evidence that you’ve sent me and loved them in the same way you’ve loved me.”*
~John 17 the MSG
- *As this one fellowship, composed of both God and man, grows in visibility, it will also grow in influence. It*

will foster the healing of human divisions. And mankind will know that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

~George Miley

- Why is the reconciliation of Christians so important in the eyes of the apostle Paul? It is not because it would allow us to be stronger together. No, it is for a deeper and more fundamental reason. Paul explains this when he writes that Christ came to *'reconcile all things on earth and in heaven.'* (Colossians 1:20) It is this vast reconciliation accomplished by Christ, that is the source of every other reconciliation.
- We are reconciled in order to become ambassadors of reconciliation . Christ sends us out to heal the wounds of division and violence around us. We are the Body of Christ, not just to be content among ourselves and to withdraw into ourselves, but to reach out to others. The human body has the vocation of expressing the personality on the outside. Likewise, the Body of Christ has the vocation of expressing that Christ wants to reconcile all humanity. Unity matters so much because the oneness of the church figures centrally in God's plan to unite all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10; 3:10).
- *"When the church ceases to be one, or ceases to be missionary, it contradicts its own nature, yet the church is not to be defined by what it is, but by that End to which it moves. And the power of that end now works in the church, the power of the Holy Spirit who is the earnest of the inheritance still to be revealed. To say that the deadlock in the ecumenical debate will be resolved in a perspective which is missionary and eschatological is not true unless it is understood that that perspective means a new obedience to, and a new possession by, the Holy Spirit. It is a perspective inseparable from action, and that action must be both in the direction of mission and in that of unity, for these are the two aspects of the one work of the Spirit."*
~Leslie Newbigin: 'The Household of God', written in 1953

5. Practical steps in making every effort to keep the unity and becoming reconciliation people

1. Go deep with God become an apprentice of Jesus, allowing Christ-like character to be formed in us through a life of discipleship. This alone allows a genuine, humble, forgiving and loving heart to be formed in us that is necessary
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to allow you to enter into the pain and grief that the Trinity experiences over our divisions
 1. Being divided is not just unfortunate, it is sin! I heard one leader say that, *"Our divisions are a monstrous act of disobedience."* God's heart is broken around our divisions and He invites us enter into this grieving with Him, to feel this pain deeply, to sit with it and allow it work on us.
3. Confess and repent of our own sinful attitudes that have led to wounding and division and when appropriate confess on behalf of our 'families' 'people', and 'Christian tradition' and forgive others
 1. *"The effort to achieve authentic reconciliation is one of the main obstacles encountered by the Ecumenical Movement. Without forgiveness we cannot proceed with our journey together"*.
~Cardinal Walter Kasper
4. Make friends, pray and serve with others outside of your own church and Christian tradition
 1. Move towards others, empty-handed, listening, trying to understand. Person-to-person encounters are irreplaceable as well as smaller gatherings around prayer and a meal together: *"In order to unite you have to love one another, in order to love one another you have to know one another, in order to know one another you have to go to meet one another."* ~Cardinal Mercier

2. Exchange of Gifts—If we can learn to emphasize the best of the different traditions, then an exchange of gifts can take place: to share what we have received from God, and also see the gifts that God has placed in others. *“We can learn from what the Holy Spirit has sown in the others.”*
- Pope Francis puts it this way, *We need to realize that, to plumb the depths of the mystery of God, we need one another, we need to encounter one another and to challenge one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who harmonizes diversities and overcomes conflicts,”*
 - *Eastern Christians—emphasize the resurrection of Christ which has allowed them to survive decades of suffering in past centuries. They have also preserved the teachings of the Church Fathers with great faithfulness*
 - *Monasticism East and West has instilled in the whole church a life of contemplation and practicing the Presence of God*
 - *The Christians of the Reformation—have emphasized certain realities of the Gospel: God offers his love freely; by His Word he encounters anyone who listens to it and puts it into practice; the immediacy of a life with God today*
 - *The Catholic Church has kept visible throughout history, the universality of communion in Christ*
 - *A great example is the Alpha Course, though started in Anglicanism is now used more among Catholics than any other Christian group*

Prayers for Unity:

"Living God, at times we are strangers on earth, disconnected by the violence, the harsh oppositions. And you breathe upon us the Spirit of peace like a gentle breeze. Transfigure the deserts of our doubts and so prepare us to be bearers of reconciliation wherever you place us, until a hope of peace arises in our world"

~Prayer of Brother Roger (founder of Taizé)

Lord, hear the prayers of your people and bring the hearts of believers together in your praise and in common sorrow for their sins. Heal all divisions among Christians that we may rejoice in the perfect unity of your Church and move together as one to eternal life in your kingdom.

~Liturgy of the Hours

Gracious Father, we pray for your
holy catholic (universal) Church.
Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace.
Where it is corrupt, purify it;
Where it is in error, direct it;
Where in any thing it is amiss, reform it.
Where it is right, strengthen it;
Where it is in want, provide for it;
Where it is divided, reunite it;
For the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Savior. Amen

~Book of Common Prayer