

### **1 Corinthians 12:12-31**

<sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup>And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup>But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. <sup>19</sup>If all were a single member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>As it is, there are many members, yet one body. <sup>21</sup>The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” <sup>22</sup>On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup>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; <sup>24</sup>whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, <sup>25</sup>that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

<sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. <sup>28</sup>And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup>Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup>Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup>But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

### **Luke 4:14-21**

<sup>14</sup>Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup>He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. <sup>16</sup>When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: <sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” <sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

## Sermon – January 21, 2007 – The Body of Christ

Good morning! Today I am going to talk about being members of the body of Christ.

But first, have any of you seen the movie “My Big Fat Greek Wedding”?

Toula, frumpy daughter of a Greek café owner and Ian, handsome white Anglo Saxon Protestant college professor fall in love.

But Toula’s Greek extended family are not happy about her new boyfriend. Her father is devastated. Toula should marry a good Greek boy who shares their traditions and culture. To them, Ian is an outsider. Toula is in anguish over her family’s upset. She begins to doubt whether her happiness with Ian is worth the uproar in the family.

Then Ian has a moment of truth. He realizes that to be happy with Toula, he needs to become part of her family and its network of relationships. Toula is not alone, she is part of a community. He realizes he needs to become part of the community too.

It’s not easy for Ian to do this and there are some hilarious moments. The turning point is Ian’s baptism into the Greek orthodox church. It is a total immersion baptism and so Ian, in his bathing suit, is dunked in a bright blue plastic baby pool which looks out of place in the ornate golden sanctuary. Ian recognizes that baptism in this family system is foundational. He has accepted this sacrament for himself.

The movie’s last scene is the wedding reception. Ian’s strait-laced parents have knocked back a few Greek liqueurs, and are dancing in a circle with everyone else. In spite of their differences, they are all now connected, members of ‘the family’ and enjoying immensely celebrating together.

Ian’s baptism is his sacramental initiation into God’s family **and** his earthly initiation into Toula’s family. In the same way each of us has been baptized into the body of Christ **and** into a particular worshipping family called a parish. So we find ourselves members, the feet, the hands, the ears, the eyes of the wonderful, mystical organism called the body of Christ.

One of the points in our epistle from Corinthians this morning is that we need our differences very much. Just as in the body, all members cannot be ‘eyes’, so too in Christ’s body, we cannot all do the same thing. We depend for survival on the different functions of the members.

Scripture assures us that despite our differences, we all belong. Scripture says ‘The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” Just as the eye needs the hands and the feet, so we are all needed in our wonderful variety.

The other point in the epistle is that what happens to one, affects everyone. If one suffers, **all** suffer, if one is honoured, **all** rejoice. Toula and Ian’s romance affects the whole family.

John Donne wrote long ago in the 1600’s - No Man is an Island, No Man stands alone (there was a song once about that) He also writes:

*The church is ..., universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. When she baptizes a child that action concerns me; for that child is thereby connected to that body which is my head too, and is grafted into that body whereof I am a member. And when she buries a man, that action concerns me: all mankind is of one author,...*

Every thing we say, everything we do, even what we think, affects those around us. It may be hard to really grasp that. Many of us have grown up strongly individualistic...we may not really understand what it means to be part of a network. We are part of a living net whose strands connect us to all others in our lives. These strands that attach us are spiritual strands, strands of love. These strands are sensitive and are constantly in motion. Sometimes they are stretched to the limit and sometimes they break. Even then, within the body, the work of healing can knit together the broken strands to restore equilibrium and health to the body. How does the body function then? Well...

At a meeting of the American Psychological Association, Jack Lipton, a psychologist and Scott Builione, a graduate student presented their findings on how members of the various sections of 11 major symphony orchestras perceived each other. They found that:

The percussionists were viewed as insensitive, unintelligent, and hard-of-hearing, yet fun-loving.

String players were seen as arrogant, stuffy, and unathletic.

"Loud" is the adjective chosen to describe the brass players.

Woodwind players were held in the highest esteem; described as quiet and meticulous, though a bit egotistical.

Interesting findings! With such divergent personalities and perceptions, how could an orchestra ever come together to make such wonderful music?

The answer is simple: regardless of how those musicians view each other, they subordinate their feelings and biases to the leadership of the conductor. Under his or her guidance, they play beautiful music.

**Our** conductor is Jesus, the Christ. In today's Gospel, he got up in the synagogue and read from the scroll. What he read from Isaiah was about himself... This is the season of Epiphany, the season of divine showings. Jesus in today's Gospel reveals his mission.

Jesus comes

to bring good news to the poor,

to release the captives and

to recover the sight of the blind,

to let the oppressed go free.

Jesus reveals God's desire to free us from all our suffering.

His mission is our mission. His reason for being is our reason for being. What our Lord said about himself is true about us...we stand with our differences gathered up, united with him to act for good; to bring good news to the poor, to release the captives and...to let the oppressed go free. WE are the orchestra with all the different instruments and all the different opinions of our fellow musicians. We have potential for dischord, but if we take our cues from our great conductor, we have great potential for making music that is harmonious, accomplishing more than we ever asked or imagined.

We are already furthering Christ's mission which is our mission too. Our monthly free community breakfast at St George's is one example. We fund this breakfast, but we also work at it...each taking a different job, working with people from other parishes. Before Christmas we joined with other Moncton parishes to raise money through the Primates World Relief and Development Fund. Together, we donated enough money to fund 3 Health Centres and to stock them. We were also able to fund 2 Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Programs. The Strike Out Child Hunger Bowling challenge will be happening again on April 6. That is another opportunity for us to reach out to help children in need right here, close to home.

So let us remember that Our Lord Jesus' mission is our mission. His reason for being is our reason for being. What our Lord said about himself is true about us...we stand

with our differences gathered up, united to act for good; to bring good news to the poor, to release the captives and...to let the oppressed go free.

Let us join together now and be nourished at the table of our Lord the risen Christ and rise from that meal renewed and transformed, members of the one mystical body.  
Amen.