

UNION WITH CHRIST

PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL

November 22, 2015
25th Sunday after Pentecost
Revision F

Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-16

Gospel: Luke 12:16-21

Today's Epistle lesson is used in the West for either the 13th or 17th Sunday after Trinity.

Table of Contents

Background to Ephesians	290
The Vine and the Branches.....	291
The Closeness of the Vine to the Branches.....	292
Pruning Grapevines.....	293
The Fruit of the Vine	295
The Vinedresser and the Vine.....	296
Christian Marriage.....	297
Christ and the Church	299
Beginning with Adam, Christ Was Announced.....	301
Christ Has Sanctified the Church.....	303
Husbands Need to Sanctify Their Wives	306
Members of His Body.....	309
Submission.....	311
The Introduction of Submission to Mankind	312
Christ Submits to the Father.....	313
All Mankind Will Submit to Christ.....	314
The Saints Discipline Their Bodies into Subjection.....	315
Our Bodies Are Not Our Own	316
Union with Christ	317
Walking Worthy of Our Calling	317
What Is the One Hope of Christ's Calling?.....	318
Our Calling is Irrevocable.....	320
How Do We Walk Worthy of Our Calling?.....	321
The Effects of Our Calling.....	324
Bearing with Each Other.....	326
The Bond of Peace	327
One Body and One Spirit: Introduction	331
One Lord	332
One Faith.....	342
One Baptism.....	345
One Church	350
One God and Father of All.....	354
Unity of Spirit	361

Background to Ephesians

Shortly after Pentecost, the Twelve Apostles divided up the world into regions; then they drew lots to see where each one would go. The lot of the Apostle John was Asia Minor, which included Ephesus, but John also had been entrusted with the care of the Virgin Mary (John 19:26-27). John remained in Jerusalem until the mid-50's AD with the Virgin Mary except for a brief period in 44 AD when he left for Ephesus with the Virgin Mary to escape the wrath of Herod (Acts 12). In the meantime, Paul filled in for John in Asia Minor until after the Dormition of the Virgin Mary.

Paul wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians from house-arrest in Rome in about 62 AD. He had first met with and reasoned with Jews in the synagogue in Ephesus in about 52 AD on his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 18:19). Although Paul did not stay long in 52 AD (Acts 18:20), he left Aquila (of the Seventy) and his wife Priscilla there and promised to return (Acts 18:18-21). About 53 AD, Paul returned on his Third Missionary Journey and spent two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10), during which time Paul probably evangelized the entire region of Asia Minor. At this time, the Church took a separate direction from the synagogue. Toward the end of his Third Missionary Journey in 57 AD, Paul had a very emotional farewell meeting (Acts 20:37-38) with the elders of the Church (Acts 20:17), knowing he may never return.

Ephesus had had a number of distinguished visitors over the years. The Apostle John and the Virgin Mary had gone there to escape the bloodbath of Herod (Agrippa) trying to please the Jews – which resulted in the martyrdom of James the son of Zebedee and the imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12:1-4). That bloodbath began in 44 AD and ended with the death of Herod soon after (Acts 12:20-23). Apollos (of the Seventy) also was in Ephesus in c. 53 AD and vigorously refuted the Jews showing from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 18:24-28).

After the death of the Virgin Mary in the mid 50's AD, the Apostle John returned to Ephesus and worked with a number of Churches in that area: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea (Revelation 2, 3). John may have been in the area when Paul wrote his Epistle.

Today's Epistle lesson from Ephesians has a pervading theme of the union of the believer and the Church with Christ. There are several analogies used in the Scriptures to help convey the concept of Union with Christ. Reviewing some of these will help us to a fuller understanding of the Epistle lesson.

The Vine and the Branches

The illustration of the Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-4) is one of many that Jesus used to illustrate His relationship with the Church. Other illustrations are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Illustrations of Christ and the Church

Christ	Church	Reference
Vine	Branches	John 15:1-4
Head	Body	Colossians 1:18
Foundation	Building	1 Corinthians 3:11-14
Bridegroom	Bride	John 3:29, Revelation 21:2
Shepherd	Sheep	John 10:1-4
The Way	Those who walk therein	Acts 22:4
Indweller	Temple	1 Corinthians 6:16-20
Firstborn	The brethren	Romans 8:29
The Heir	Heirs together with Him	Hebrews 1:2, Galatians 4:7
The Life	The living	John 11:25
The Resurrection	Those who rise again	John 11:24
The Light	The enlightened	John 1:4-9

Gregory of Nyssa stated¹ that the various names for Christ that relate to us describe how He benefited us.

“The Lord would not have been called a vine, except for the planting of those who are rooted in Him. He would not have been called a shepherd, had not the sheep of the house of Israel been lost, or a physician, except for the sake of those that were sick. He would not have received for Himself the rest of these names, had He not made the titles appropriate to those who were benefited by Him, by some action of His providence.”

John Chrysostom stated² that, from the context (just prior to Jesus’ arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane), the main point of the illustration of the vine and the branches is that we can do nothing without His power.

“What does Jesus imply by the comparison of the vine and the branches? That the man who pays no attention to His words can have no life, and that the miracles about to take place, would be worked by the power of Christ! How is the Father the Vinedresser? Does the Son need a power working within? No! This example does not signify this. Observe with what exactness He goes through the comparison. He didn’t say that the ‘root’ enjoys the care of the Vinedresser, but ‘the branches’. The root is brought in here for no other purpose, but that they may learn that they can work nothing without His power, and that they ought to be united with Him by faith as the branch with the vine.”

The Closeness of the Vine to the Branches

The Apostle John records Jesus’ statements about Him being the vine and we the branches (John 15:1-4). Both vine and branches are an integral part of the plant and a grapevine would not function without both. The branches carry all the fruit, but the vine and root provide nourishment. Both are essential for they are all part of one plant. Thus we are united with Jesus in the body of Christ.

Chrysostom noted³ that any separation that exists between Christ and us means trouble, and that we should be joined to Him especially by our works.

“If there were any interval between Christ and us, immediately we would perish. The branch, by its adherence to the vine, draws in the fatness; the building stands because it is cemented together with the foundation. If it stands apart, it perishes, having nothing to support itself on. Let us not then merely hold onto Christ, but let us be cemented to Him, for if we stand apart, we perish. ‘Those who keep themselves far away from You shall perish’ (Psalm 73:27 LXX). Let us be joined to Him, and let us be joined by our works. ‘He that keeps my Commandments, the same abides in Me’” (John 14:21 in substance).

Athanasius of Alexandria stated⁴ that Christ, as a Foundation, had to be of like essence with the building that is built on it, just like the vine and the branches. Thus the Foundation and the building link Christ’s humanity with our humanity and do not refer to His Divinity. A stone

¹ Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius, III, 7.

² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXVI, 1.

³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, VIII, 7.

⁴ Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses Against the Arians, II, xxii, 74.

is only spoken of as a “foundation” after it is laid in place in the earth where the building is to be built.

“Paul wrote, ‘No other foundation can a man lay except that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ; but let every man take heed how he builds on it’ (1 Corinthians 3:10-11). The foundation must be of the same essence as the things built on it, that both may be well formed together. Being the Word, He has no one like Himself, who may be formed with Him; for He is Only Begotten. But having become man, there are many like Himself. According to His manhood, we, as precious stones, may be built on Him, and may become a temple of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us. He is a foundation, and we stones built upon Him; He is a Vine and we are knit to Him as branches. We are not knit to Him according to the Essence of the Godhead; this is impossible; but according to His manhood, for the branches must be like the vine, since we are like Him according to the flesh.”

“Thus He didn’t say, ‘He made me a foundation,’ lest He might seem to be made and to have a beginning of being, and the heretics might find a shameless occasion for heresy; but He said, ‘He founded me’ (Ephesians 2:20). A foundation is made for the sake of the stones that are raised upon it; it is not a random process, but a stone is first transported from the mountain and set down deep into the earth. While a stone is on the mountain, it is not a foundation; when needed, and it is transported, and set deep in the earth. If the stone could speak, then it would say, ‘He has now founded me, who brought me here from the mountain’. The Lord did not take a beginning of existence when He became a foundation; He was the Word before that; but when He put on our body, which He took from Mary, then He says ‘He has founded me’. So He is founded for our sakes, taking on Him what is ours that we, as incorporated and compacted and bound together in Him through the likeness of the flesh, may attain to a perfect man, and remain immortal and incorruptible”.

Pruning Grapevines

Let’s look at grapevines in more detail. Those who have grown grapes for many years, usually do a lot of pruning. Most of the fruit of the grapevine is carried by the new growth. So every year in the fall, growers prune their vines back to the main stalk leaving just buds in strategic places for new growth. This way, the maximum new growth appears every year – and the maximum fruit. So long as the root system is healthy, the vine will replace everything that has been pruned away early in the new season. It’s common in the spring for branches to grow a foot every week.

There is a similar relationship between Christ and us. Jesus is the true vine and God the Father is the vinedresser (John 15:1). Every branch that bears fruit, the Father prunes that it may bear more fruit (John 15:2). This is the action of the Cross in our lives. On the other hand, branches that don’t bear fruit, He takes them away (John 15:2). Branches that don’t bear fruit sounds like faith without works. A third category is branches that don’t abide in the vine (John 15:6); these are cast out, wither and are thrown into the fire. This may be a reference to heretics throughout the ages whose teachings do not last and whose end is Perdition.

Clement of Alexandria stated⁵ that the Lord prunes His branches so that they produce fruit, not just wood. This compels the soul to produce fruit rather than engage in lust.

“The Lord shows Himself very clearly when, describing figuratively His manifold and in many ways serviceable culture, He says, ‘I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser’ (John 15:1). He adds, ‘Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bring forth more fruit’ (John 15:2). The vine that is not pruned grows mostly wood, not grapes; so also man. The Word — the pruning knife — clears away the unrestrained shoots; this compels the impulses of the soul to produce fruit, not to indulge in lust. Reproof addressed to sinners has their salvation for its aim; the word is harmoniously adjusted to each one’s conduct; now with tightened cords, now with relaxed cords. Accordingly it was very plainly said by Moses, ‘Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin’” (Exodus 20:20).

Basil the Great noted⁶ that our Vinedresser digs around our souls to separate us from the cares of the world and allow us to receive more nourishment from the roots. He also prunes us so that we don’t generate too much wood, such as the applause of the world.

“He asks us to allow the soil we live in to be broken up; this is what the soul does when it disengages itself from the cares of the world, which are a weight on our hearts. He, who is freed from carnal affections and from the love of riches, and, far from being dazzled by them, disdains this miserable vain glory.”

“When the soil is broken up he breathes, free from the useless weight of earthly thoughts. We must not, in the spirit of the parable, generate too much wood, that is, live with ostentation, and gain the applause of the world. We must bring forth fruits, keeping the proof of our works for the vinedresser”.

John Chrysostom stated⁷ that the pruning by the Father applies just to the branches, not to the root, which Christ didn’t address at all. Even though the branches are excellent, they still need to be pruned; those that don’t bear fruit, however, can’t even remain on the Vine.

“Christ alludes to the Apostles’ manner of life, showing that without works it is not possible to be in Him. ‘Every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it’ (John 15:1). That is, ‘He causes it to enjoy great care’. Yet the root requires care in addition to the branches, in having the ground broken up and cleared, yet about this He said nothing here, but focused just on the branches. This shows that He is sufficient to Himself, and that the disciples need much help from the Vinedresser, although they are excellent. Therefore He said, ‘those which bear fruit, He prunes’. The one branch, because it is fruitless, cannot even remain in the Vine, but for the other, because it bears fruit, He renders it more fruitful.”

“In order that the disciples might not be separated from Him by timidity, Jesus glues to Himself their souls slackened through fear, and holds out to them good hope for the future. The root remains fixed; it is only the branches that are taken away or left. Having urged them on in both ways, by things pleasant and things painful, He requires first what is to be done on our side.”

⁵ Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, I, 8.

⁶ Basil the Great, Hexaameron, V, 6.

⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXVI, 1.

“Do you see that the Son contributes at least as much as the Father towards the care of the disciples? The Father prunes, but the Son keeps them in Himself. Staying connected to the root is what makes the branches to be fruit-bearing. That which is not pruned, if it remains on the root, bears fruit, though perhaps not so much as it ought; but that which doesn’t remain, bears none at all. But still the ‘pruning’ also has been shown to belong to the Son, and the ‘abiding in the root’, to the Father, who also begot the Root. Do you see how all is common, both the ‘pruning’, and the enjoying the virtue which is from the root?”

The Fruit of the Vine

Let’s look at the fruit of the vine in more detail to see what the implications are. Christ had said, “I will not drink of the fruit of this vine, until that day when I will drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29). Irenaeus of Lyons stated⁸ that this promise implies the inheritance of the earth as our home and the Resurrection in the flesh.

“Christ will Himself renew the inheritance of the earth, and will reorganize the mystery of the glory of His sons. As David says, ‘You renew the face of the earth’ (Psalm 104:30). He promised to drink of the fruit of the vine with His disciples, thus indicating both these points: namely the inheritance of the earth in which the new fruit of the vine is drunk, and the resurrection of His disciples in the flesh. The new flesh, which rises again, is the same that received the new cup. He cannot by any means be understood as drinking of the fruit of the vine when settled down with his disciples above in a super-celestial place like heaven. Nor are they who drink it devoid of flesh, for to drink of that which flows from the vine pertains to flesh, and not spirit.”

Hilary of Poitiers stated⁹ that the point of the illustration of the Vine and the branches is to distinguish Christ’s humanity from His and the Father’s Divinity. We are “in Christ” as the branches are in the Vine.

“At the time of Christ’s Passion, He unfolded the mystery of His assumption of flesh. Because He assumed flesh, we are in Him, as the branches in the Vine; unless He had become the Vine, we could have borne no good fruit. He exhorts us to abide in Himself, through faith in His assumed body, that, since the Word has been made flesh, we may be in the nature of His flesh, as the branches are in the Vine (John 15:1-2). He separates the form of the Father’s majesty from the humility of His assumed flesh by calling Himself the Vine. The Vine is the source of unity for all the branches, and the Father is the careful Vinedresser, Who prunes away its useless and barren branches to be burnt in the fire. He said, ‘He that has seen Me, has seen the Father also’ (John 14:9), and ‘The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works’, and ‘Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?’ (John 14:10). By saying these things, He revealed the truth of His birth and the mystery of His Incarnation. He continues until He comes to the saying, ‘The Father is greater than I’ (John 14:28); after this, to complete the meaning of these words, He adds the illustration of the vinedresser, the vine, and the branches, which directs our notice to His submission to bodily humiliation. He says that because the Father is greater than Himself, He is going

⁸ Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, V, xxxiii, 1.

⁹ Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, IX, 55.

to the Father, and that love should rejoice, that He is going to the Father; that is, to receive back His glory from the Father” (John 17:5).

The Vinedresser and the Vine

The Father is the Vinedresser and Christ is the Vine; but Christ is the Vine in His humanity, not in His Divinity. It has to be this way, since the branches (that is, us) are one essence with the Vine, which is not true if the Vine represents Christ in His Divinity.

Ambrose of Milan wrote¹⁰ to address a misinterpretation of the Vine and the branches by the heretics of his day, who claimed that the Vine referred to Christ’s Divinity, not His humanity, and that the Father, as Vinedresser is greater than the Son. If this were the case, the Apostle Paul would be greater than the Son of God, since he refers to himself as vinedresser also. Since the Vine and branches are the same nature, this makes Christ a man only and not God. In fact, the Father is greater in that He tends and dresses Christ’s flesh just as the vinedresser dresses and tends his vines.

“Some heretics interpreted the Vinedresser as greater than the Vine, and therefore that Christ is not God. If this were the case, then Paul, who calls himself a vinedresser, is also greater than the Son of God.”

“If you interpret the vine with respect to the Substance of Christ’s Godhead, and if you suppose such a diversity of Godhead between the Father and the Son as there is of nature between a vinedresser and a vine, you insult both the Father and the Son. You insult the Son because if He is, as touching His Godhead, beneath a vinedresser, then He must also be reckoned lower than the Apostle Paul, since Paul called himself a vinedresser. ‘I have planted; Apollos has watered; but God has given the increase’ (1 Corinthians 3:6). Paul must then be better than the Son of God!”

“If the term ‘vinedresser’ comprehends in its designation all the preeminence of the Father’s Sovereignty, then, seeing that Paul too is a vinedresser, you set the Apostle Paul, to whom you deny that the Son is equal, on an even footing with the Father.”

“Paul wrote, ‘Neither he that plants is anything, nor he that waters; but God, Who gives the increase’ (1 Corinthians 3:7). If you rest the fullness of the Father’s Majesty in a name which stands for weakness (i.e. Planter) observe what your blasphemy intends. You expose the Father to contempt under the title of a vinedresser, and demand another God to provide the increase of the Father’s labor. Wickedly, therefore, do you think to exalt the Dignity of God the Father by the use of the term ‘vinedresser’, in which God the Father is brought down to the level of man, as being designated by a common title.”

“Moreover, if the Vine and its branches are of one nature, the Son of God appears, not to have taken upon Him our flesh, through the mystery of Incarnation, but to have altogether sprung into being from the flesh.”

“Jeremiah said, ‘O Lord, teach Me and I will know. Then saw I their purpose. For I did not know I was like an innocent lamb led to be sacrificed. They plotted an evil device against Me, saying, Come, let us put wood in his bread, and destroy Him root and branch from the land of the living’ (Jeremiah 11:17-18 OSB LXX). If the Son speaks here of the mystery of His coming Incarnation, then surely it is the Son Who speaks in an earlier passage, ‘I have

¹⁰ Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, IV, xii, 160, 162-164, 166-167, 169.

planted a fruitful vine for you, one most healthy and sweet; yet you turned it into a vine unknown to Me, with a taste¹¹ of bitterness” (Jeremiah 2:21 OSB LXX).

“Thus you see that the Son also is the vinedresser, of one Name with the Father, one work, one dignity and Substance. If, then, the Son is both Vine and Vinedresser, plainly we infer the meaning of the Vine with regard to the mystery of the Incarnation.”

“If the Son of God is called the Vine with respect to His Incarnation, you see what our Lord meant in saying, ‘The Father is greater than I’ (John 14:28). After this, He proceeded immediately, ‘I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser’ (John 15:1), that you might know that the Father is greater in so far as He dresses and tends our Lord’s flesh, as the vinedresser dresses and tends his vines. Further, our Lord’s flesh is that which could increase in stature with age (Luke 2:52), and be wounded through suffering.”

Cyril of Jerusalem linked¹² Christ’s burial in the ground with the planting of the vine to root out the curse on the ground that had been there since the days of Adam.

“A garden was the place of Christ’s burial, and a vine was planted there, like He has said, ‘I am the vine!’ (John 15:1). He was planted therefore in the earth in order that the curse, which came because of Adam, might be rooted out. The earth had been condemned to thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:17-18); the true Vine sprang up out of the earth that the saying might be fulfilled, ‘Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven’” (Psalm 85:11).

Christian Marriage

Paul concluded a section in Ephesians that sounds like advice for married couples with the words: “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:32). What is it about Christ and the Church that is such a big issue?

Christian marriage models Christ and the Church in many more ways that we might think. This began with Adam and Eve, where the description of their marriage foretold the details of the Incarnation. Just as in our relationship with Christ, our bodies are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19), so in Christian marriage our body belongs to our spouse. Because of this, it is important for the husband to concentrate on sanctifying his wife as Christ sanctifies the Church. An unpopular topic today is the wife submitting to her husband. But yet Christ submitted to the Father; this does not make Christ a lesser god than the Father. We will take these aspects of Christian marriage one at a time and look at how they reveal important aspects about union with Christ.

John Chrysostom noted¹³ that Paul gave his advice on personal matters on occasion¹⁴. But Paul’s words to the Ephesians were not just his advice; this was much deeper in importance, since a household is a little Church. Paul used Abraham and Sarah as an example of a little Church, where Abraham’s servants were so loyal that they risked their lives at his command.

¹¹ Bitter grapes come from a neglect of the vineyard.

¹² Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIV, 11.

¹³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XX, v. 33.

¹⁴ For example, on whether to marry or not (1 Corinthians 7:6).

“Paul does not think it right to introduce his own advice, as he does in many cases, with examples from outside the Church. The example of Christ, so great and forcible, was alone enough; especially regarding the argument for submission. A man leaves his father and mother all the time outside the Church. Paul does not say, and ‘shall dwell with’, but ‘shall be joined to his wife’, thus showing the closeness of the union, and the fervent love. Paul explains the submission in such a way that the two appear to be no longer two. He does not say, ‘one spirit’; he does not say, ‘one soul’, but instead ‘one flesh’. She is a second authority, possessing indeed an authority and a considerable equality of dignity; but at the same time the husband is somewhat superior, which consists chiefly in the well-being of the house. Paul took the example of Christ to show that we ought not only to love, but also to govern; ‘that she may be holy and without blemish’ (Ephesians 5:27). The word ‘flesh’ has reference to love, and the word ‘shall be joined’ also has reference to love. If the husband shall make his wife ‘holy and without blemish’, everything else will follow. Seek the things which are of God and those which are of man will follow readily enough (). Govern your wife, and thus the whole house will be in harmony. Hear what Paul said, ‘If they want to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home’ (1 Corinthians 14:35). If men thus regulated their own houses, they shall also be fit for the management of the Church. Indeed a house is a little Church. Thus it is possible for us by becoming good husbands and wives, to surpass all others.”

“Consider Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and the 318 born in his house (Genesis 14:14). The whole house was harmoniously knit together; the whole was full of piety. Sarah ‘respected her husband’; listen to her words, ‘The thing has not as yet happened to me, even until now, and my Lord is old’ (Genesis 18:12 LXX). Abraham so loved Sarah, that in all things he obeyed her commands (Genesis 21:9-14). The young child Isaac was virtuous, and the servants born in the house were so excellent that they willingly risked their lives with their master. One of them was so admirable, that he was even entrusted with the marriage of the only-begotten child with a journey into a foreign country (Genesis 24:1-67). Just as with a general, when his soldiers are well organized, the enemy has no opportunity to attack. So it is also when husband, wife, children and servants are all interested in the same things, great is the harmony of the house. Where this is not the case, the whole is often overthrown and broken up by one bad servant.”

Chrysostom also stated¹⁵ that marriage is a spiritual relationship modeled on Christ and the Church. What makes a good marriage is not passion and the flesh, but spiritual relationships.

“Marriage, when it takes place according to Christ, is a spiritual marriage and a spiritual birth, not of blood, not of work, nor of the will of the flesh. Such was the birth of Christ, not of blood, not of work. Such also was the birth of Isaac, ‘Sarah had passed the age of childbearing’ (Genesis 18:11). What makes a marriage is not passion, nor the flesh, but a spiritual relationship, the soul being united to God by an unspeakable union, and which He alone knows. Therefore Paul said, ‘He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him’ (1 Corinthians 6:17). Note how earnestly Paul endeavors to unite both flesh with flesh, and spirit with spirit. If marriage were a thing to be condemned, Paul would never have called Christ and the Church a bride and bridegroom; never would he have brought forward by way of exhortation the words, ‘A man shall leave his father

¹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XX, v. 33.

and his mother’; never would he have added ‘but I speak concerning Christ and of the Church’ (Ephesians 5:31-32). Of the Church it is that the Psalmist said, ‘Listen, O daughter, consider, and incline your ear; forget your own people, and your father’s house. So the king will greatly desire your beauty’ (Psalm 45:10-11). Therefore Christ said, ‘I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world’ (John 16:28). But when I say, that He left the Father, do not imagine such a thing that happens among men, like a change of place; He didn’t literally come forth, but because of His Incarnation, so also is the expression, ‘He left the Father’”.

Christ and the Church

The mystery of Christ and the Church addresses the Incarnation, where Christ is both God and man in one person. Many Church Fathers have pointed out how Christian marriage illustrates the Incarnation, where the man represents the Deity of Christ and the woman represents His humanity. The illustration began with Adam and Eve, where Eve was “bone of Adam’s bone and flesh of his flesh” (Genesis 2:23). The Church is the flesh or the humanity of Christ; husbands are instructed to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ also does the Church” (Ephesians 5:28-29).

John Cassian described¹⁶ the illustration of the Incarnation when Jesus spoke of divorce to the Jewish leaders, who were plotting the Crucifixion, which would separate Jesus’ soul from His body¹⁷. Jesus said, “What God has joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6). Just as the Son of God put His glory aside to become man, so it is with husband and wife. “For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31).

“The Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees, ‘What God has joined together, let not man put asunder’ (Matthew 19:6). This was originally spoken by God in answer to the matter of divorce. However, the deep wisdom of God spoke more of spiritual things than carnal things. When the Jews of that day believed that Jesus was only a man without Divinity, and the Lord was asked a question about the union in marriage, He referred to His Divinity and not so much to marriage. His answer applied to greater and deeper matters, when he said, ‘What God has joined together, let not man put asunder’. That is, ‘Do not sever what God has joined together in My Person. Do not let human wickedness sever that which the Divine Glory has united in Me’, that is Divinity to humanity in one person.”

“Paul said the same thing, speaking about these same subjects, expounding the things that God had proclaimed in a mystery. When he was discussing carnal union, on which Christ had been asked a question, he repeated those same words from the Law that Christ had spoken of. Paul puts in the names of husband and wife, whom he exhorts to love one another. ‘Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the Church’. Again, ‘So men ought to love their wives even as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ also does the Church, for we

¹⁶ John Cassian, *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, V, 11-12.

¹⁷ That is, when Christ’s body was in the grave, His soul descended into Hades. In His Deity, He is Omnipresent, on the Throne of God in heaven, in the grave with His body and in Hades with His soul.

are members of His body' (Ephesians 5:25-30). By adding to the mention of man and wife the mention of Christ and the Church, he leads us away from taking it carnally to understanding it in a spiritual sense."

"When Paul had said this, he added those words which the Lord had applied in the Gospel, 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh'. After this with special emphasis he added, 'This is a great mystery'. He cuts off any carnal interpretation by saying that it is a Divine mystery. After this he added, 'But I am speaking of Christ and the Church' (Ephesians 5:31-32). Not everyone he was addressing could grasp the spiritual interpretation. At least we can grasp that it IS a spiritual interpretation, because both refer to Christ."

"Paul, who elsewhere teaches the same thing using words of the same force, says, 'Great is the mystery of godliness, which was revealed in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory' (1 Timothy 3:16). What then is that great mystery, which was revealed in the flesh? Clearly it was God born of the flesh, God seen in bodily form, Who was openly received up in glory just as He was openly revealed in the flesh. This then is the great mystery, of which he says, 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife; and they two shall be one flesh' (Ephesians 5:31). The two in one flesh were God and the human soul, for in the one flesh of man, which is joined to God, are present God and the soul, as the Lord Himself says, 'No one takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again' (John 10:18). In this are three: God, the flesh, and the soul. He is God who speaks; the flesh in which He speaks; the soul of which He speaks. He 'ascended up where He was before' (John 6:62), of whom we read, 'No one has ascended to heaven, but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of man who is in heaven' (John 3:13). For this cause, He has left His father and mother, i.e., God from whom He was begotten and that 'Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all' (Galatians 4:26), and began to cling to human flesh, as to his wife. He was joined to his wife, for just as man and wife make but one body, so the glory of Divinity and the flesh of man are united; and the two, God and the soul, became one flesh. For just as that flesh had God as an indweller in it, so also the soul had within it dwelling with God. This is that great mystery, where our admiration for Paul summons us to search this out. The flesh of the Church is the flesh of Christ."

Cyprian of Carthage wrote¹⁸ that the Church bears children, sons of God, through baptism. Heretics and those who sever themselves from the Church cannot do this since they are dead; one must be alive to be born of God. In order to have God as our Father, we must have the Church first as our Mother.

"Those who are born in the Church are the sons of God! Paul proves that in baptism the old man dies and the new man is born, 'He saved us by the washing of regeneration' (Titus 3:5). If regeneration is in the washing, that is, in baptism, how can heresy, which is not the spouse of Christ, generate sons to God by Christ? It is the Church alone, which, united with Christ, spiritually bears sons; as Paul again says, 'Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it with the washing of water' (Ephesians 5:26). If

¹⁸ Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle to Pompey, LXXIII, 6-7.

she is the beloved spouse who alone is sanctified by Christ, and alone is cleansed by His washing, it is clear that heresy, which is not the spouse of Christ and cannot be cleansed or sanctified by His washing, cannot bear sons to God.”

“One is not born by the imposition of hands when he receives the Holy Spirit, but in baptism; being already born, he receives the Holy Spirit, even as it happened in the first man Adam. God first formed him, and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. The Spirit cannot be received, unless he who receives first has an existence. The birth of Christians is in baptism, while the generation and sanctification of baptism are with the spouse of Christ alone. She is able spiritually to conceive and to bear sons to God. How can someone have God as his Father, before he has had the Church for his Mother? No heresy and no schism can have the sanctification of saving baptism.”

Beginning with Adam, Christ Was Announced

After the Fall of Adam and Eve, the coming of Christ was described in the words of God to the serpent, “He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15). But more details of the coming of Christ were also given for those who had the vision to see it.

After the forming of Adam out of clay, God breathed into him the breath of life. Thus Adam was created in the image of God, where his soul, which is a spiritual substance, was the part of Adam that was in the image of God. Adam’s human body began to be subject to age, death and decay because of his fall into sin, but his soul doesn’t die. When God took a rib out of Adam’s body to form Eve, she became “bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh” (Genesis 2:23), but she had a unique and independent soul. Thus Adam and Eve were “one flesh” since she was formed from Adam’s rib. The same has been true ever since, where husband and wife are referred to as “one flesh”, and they are instructed to honor their spouse as they do their own flesh (Ephesians 5:28-30). But there is more to Adam and Eve than this.

Methodius of Olympus¹⁹ noted how Paul set a much higher standard of the description of Adam and Eve than just a historical account of human succession. Instead Paul stated that the account of Adam and Eve prophesied concerning Christ and the Church.

“Paul would not vainly refer the union of the first man and woman to Christ and the Church, if the Scripture meant nothing more than what is conveyed by words and history. If the Scriptures (Genesis 2-3) refer only to the union of man and woman, why should Paul guide us into the way of the Spirit, and allegorize the history of Adam and Eve as having a reference to Christ and the Church? Adam said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined to his wife; and they shall be one flesh’ (Genesis 2:24). Paul does not take it according to its mere natural sense, as referring to the union of man and woman. One could explain the passage in a natural sense, and say that the Spirit is speaking only of conception and births; that the bone taken from the bones was made another human being. But Paul, referring the passage to Christ, teaches ‘He that loves his wife loves himself. No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord does the Church. We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined

¹⁹ Methodius of Olympus, Banquet of the Ten Virgins, III, 1.

to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church” (Ephesians 5:32).

Methodius continued to say that Paul referred to Christ as “the last Adam”, indicating a direct comparison between Adam and Christ.

“It was fitting that the Evil One should be overcome by none other than him whom he had deceived, and him whom he boasted that he held in subjection. It was not possible that sin and condemnation should be destroyed, unless that same man on whose account it had been said, ‘Dust you are, and to dust you shall return’ (Genesis 3:19), should be created new, and undo the sentence, which for his sake had come on everyone. That ‘as in Adam’ at first ‘all die’, even so again ‘in Christ’, who assumed the nature and position of Adam, should ‘all be made alive’ (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Methodius continued²⁰ his comparison between Adam and Christ; in His person, His Divinity is joined to His humanity just as Adam was to Eve. Eve is like the Church who gives birth to the spiritual seed, which is virtue. The Church “increases and multiplies” just like Eve by the union and communion of the Word in the Eucharist. The Scriptures refer to the saints as the helper and bride of Christ.

“Man had become identical with the same light which poured into him. Therefore Paul directly referred to Christ the words that had been spoken of Adam. Thus the Church is formed out of His bones and flesh. The Word, leaving His Father in heaven, came down to be ‘joined to His wife’ (Ephesians 5:31), endured His passion, and willingly suffered death for her, that He might present the Church to Himself glorious and blameless. He cleansed her by the laver (Ephesians 5:26-27), for receiving the spiritual and blessed seed, which is sown by Him who implants it in the depths of the mind. The seed is conceived and formed by the Church, as by a woman, so as to give birth and nourishment to virtue. In this way, the command, ‘Increase and multiply’ (Genesis 1:22), is duly fulfilled. The Church increases daily in greatness, beauty and multitude by the union and communion of the Word, who still comes down to us by the memorial of His passion (i.e. the Eucharist). Otherwise the Church could not conceive believers, and give them new birth by the laver of regeneration. Christ had to empty Himself for their sake, that He might be contained by them. All who are born again by the laver receive His bones and His flesh, that is, of His holiness and of His glory. He who says that the bones and flesh of Wisdom represent understanding and virtue, is correct; and that the side²¹ is the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, of whom the illuminated²² receiving are fitly born again to incorruption.”

“It is impossible for anyone to be a partaker of the Holy Spirit, and to be chosen a member of Christ, unless the Word had come. Being filled with the Spirit, and rising again from sleep with Him who was laid to sleep for his sake, we are able to receive renewal and restoration. We are rightly called the side of the Word, the sevenfold Spirit of truth (Isaiah 11:2 LXX). After Christ’s incarnation and passion, God took and prepared a helper comparable to Him (Genesis 2:18 OSB LXX); that is, the souls which are betrothed and given in

²⁰ Methodius of Olympus, *Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, III, 8.

²¹ Or rib, like Eve was created from Adam’s rib (Genesis 2:22)

²² The term “illuminated” or the “newly illuminated” is commonly used among the Greek Fathers for the baptized.

marriage to Him. The Scriptures frequently call the assembly and mass of believers by the name of the Church. Those who embrace the truth clearly, being delivered from the evils of the flesh, become, on account of their perfect purification and faith, a Church and helper of Christ, betrothed and given in marriage to Him as a virgin (2 Corinthians 11:2). Receiving the pure and genuine seed of His teaching, they cooperate with Him, helping in preaching for the salvation of others. Those who are still imperfect, beginning their lessons, are born to salvation, and shaped, as by mothers, by those who are more perfect, until they are brought forth and regenerated to the greatness and beauty of virtue. These, in their turn making progress, having become a Church, assist in laboring for the birth and nurture of other children, accomplishing in the receptacle of the soul, as in a womb, the blameless will of the Word.”

Leo the Great described²³ the Great Mystery of Christ and the Church as being introduced to Adam and Eve as two in one flesh. Other fathers of the Church also described²⁴ this.

“Whosoever doesn’t confess the human body in Christ, must know that he is unworthy of the mystery of the Incarnation, and has no share in that sacred union of which Paul speaks, ‘For we are His members, of His flesh and of His bones. For this cause a man shall leave father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and there shall be two in one flesh’ (Ephesians 5:30-31). Explaining what was meant by this, he added, ‘This mystery is great, but I speak in respect of Christ and the Church’ (Ephesians 5:32). Therefore, from the beginning of the human race, Christ is announced to all men as coming in the flesh. In which, ‘there shall be two in one flesh’; there are undoubtedly two, God and man, Christ and the Church, which issued from the Bridegroom’s flesh, when it received the mystery of redemption and regeneration, water and blood flowing from the side of the Crucified. The condition of a new creature, which at baptism puts off not the covering of true flesh but the taint of the old condemnation, is this: a man is made the body of Christ, because Christ also is the body of a man.”

Christ Has Sanctified the Church

Paul stated, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself” (Ephesians 5:35-38). What is this sanctifying and cleansing all about?

Just prior to the Crucifixion, Jesus said that He sanctified Himself (John 17:19). If He was already the Holy God, why did He need to sanctify Himself? In the Old Testament, anything offered as a sacrifice to the Lord was automatically holy, meaning it was sanctified. If it was set aside for God, it was holy; since Jesus was setting aside His human body as a sacrifice, He was “sanctifying” His human body. In the Old Testament, sheep and other animals were set aside for sacrifice; now it is our human bodies that are set aside. As Paul said, “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1). The Psalmist said, “We were counted as sheep for

²³ Leo the Great, Letter to the Clergy of Constantinople, LIX, 4.

²⁴ Tertullian, A Treatise on the Soul, I, ix, 11, 21; On Monogamy, IV, vi, 5; On Fasting, IV, viii, 3.

the slaughter” (Psalm 44:22). Jesus said, referring to His disciples, “That they may be sanctified by Your truth” (John 17:19), thus making them an offering also.

Since sanctification meant being holy, one could not be holy and still touch unclean things, like idols, prostitutes and dead bodies. In the New Testament, unclean things have been extended²⁵ to include greed, covetousness, heresy, etc.

John Chrysostom noted²⁶ that the Lord promised that we would be His sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18). In order to maintain this relationship, cleansing of body and soul is needed.

“We are temples of God, sons and daughters, have Him indwelling and walking in us, His people, with Him for our God and Father. Therefore, ‘Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit’ (2 Corinthians 7:1). Let us not touch unclean things, for this is cleansing of the flesh; let us not touch things which defile the soul, for this is cleansing of the spirit. Yet he is not content with this only, but adds, ‘Perfecting holiness in the fear of God’. To avoid touching the unclean thing does not make one clean, but there needs to be something else besides in order for us to become holy: earnestness, heedfulness, piety. Paul well said, ‘In the fear of God’. It is possible to perfect chasteness, not in the fear of God but for vainglory.”

Leo the Great described²⁷ how Christ sanctified the Church at the Crucifixion. He had a secret design and restrained His power in order to destroy death and the author of death.

“Paul says the Father ‘did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all’ (Romans 8:32); again, he says, ‘For Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify it’ (Ephesians 5:25-26). The giving up of the Lord to His Passion was as much of the Father’s as of His own will, so that not only did the Father ‘forsake’ Him, but He also abandoned Himself in a certain sense in voluntary withdrawal. The might of the Crucified restrained itself from those wicked men, and in order to make use of a secret design, He refused to make use of His open power. How would He, who had come to destroy death and the author of death by His Passion, have saved sinners, if he had resisted His persecutors? The Jews believed that Jesus had been forsaken by God, against Whom they had been able to commit such unholy cruelty. Not understanding the mystery of His wondrous endurance, they said in blasphemous mockery, ‘He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe Him’ (Matthew 27:42). O foolish scribes and wicked priests, the Savior’s power was not to be displayed at your blind will; the Redemption of mankind was not to be delayed in obedience to blasphemers’ evil tongues. If you had wished to recognize the Godhead of the Son of God, you could have observed His numberless works.”

Cyril of Jerusalem stated²⁸ that the partaking of Christ’s Body and Blood is the means by which we are sanctified, both soul and body. By doing this we become partakers of the Divine Nature. There is the Bread of Heaven and the Cup of Salvation; the bread corresponds to our

²⁵ See for example Ephesians 5:5, 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 2 Corinthians 6:15-17.

²⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XIII, 1.

²⁷ Leo the Great, Sermon for Holy Wednesday, LXVIII, 1.

²⁸ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XXII, 3-9.

body; the Word to our soul. This is the Table prepared before me, and my head is anointed with the oil of the Holy Chrism.

“With full assurance let us partake as of the Body and Blood of Christ. In the figure of Bread is given to you His Body, and in the figure of Wine His Blood; by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, you are made of the same body and the same blood with Him. Thus we come to bear Christ in us, because His Body and Blood are distributed through our members; thus it is that we became ‘partakers of the divine nature’” (2 Peter 1:4).

“Christ said, ‘Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood, you have no life in you’ (John 6:53). They did not hear His saying in a spiritual sense and were offended; they left, supposing that He was inviting them to eat human flesh.”

“In the Old Testament there was showbread; but this has come to an end. In the New Testament there is Bread of heaven, and a Cup of salvation, sanctifying soul and body; as the Bread corresponds to our body, so is the Word appropriate to our soul.”

“Do not consider the Bread and the Wine as bare elements; they are, according to the Lord’s declaration, the Body and Blood of Christ. Even though sense suggests this to you, yet let faith establish you. Don’t judge the matter from the taste; from faith be fully assured without misgiving that the Body and Blood of Christ have been granted to you.”

“David will advise you about what this means, ‘You have prepared a table before me in the presence of them that afflict me’ (Psalm 23:5 LXX). What he says is to this effect: Before Your coming, the evil spirits prepared a table for men, polluted and defiled and full of demonic influence. But since Your coming. O Lord, ‘You have prepared a table before me’. When the man says to God, ‘You have prepared before me a table’, what other does he indicate but that mystical and spiritual Table, which God has prepared for us contrary to and in opposition to the evil spirits? The former had communion with demons, but this, with God. When David said, ‘You have anointed my head with oil’ (Psalm 23:5), it was with oil that He anointed your head upon your forehead, for the seal which you have of God. You have been made ‘the engraving of the signet, ‘Holiness of the Lord’ (Exodus 28:36 LXX). And ‘your cup cheers me like the best wine’ (Psalm 23:5 LXX). You see that cup here spoken of, which Jesus took in His hands, and gave thanks, and said, ‘This is My blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins’”.

“Solomon hinted at this grace, ‘Come here, eat your bread²⁹ with joy, and drink your wine³⁰ with a merry heart; and let not oil be lacking³¹ on your head; and let your garments be always white, for the Lord has favorably accepted your works’ (Ecclesiastes 9:7-8 LXX). Before you came to Baptism, your works were ‘vanity of vanities’ (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12:8). But now, having put off your old garments, and put on those which are spiritually white, you must be continually robed in white. Of course we don’t mean that you always have to wear white clothing; but you must be clad in the garments that are truly white, shining and spiritual, that you may say with the blessed Isaiah, “Let my soul rejoice in the Lord, for He has clothed me with the robe of salvation, and the garment of joy.

²⁹ That is, the spiritual bread. Come here, he calls with the call to salvation and blessing.

³⁰ That is, the spiritual wine.

³¹ Cyril states that He alludes even to the mystic Chrism.

He has put a mitre on me as a bridegroom; He adorned me with ornaments as a bride” (Isaiah 61:10 LXX).

“Learn these things, and be fully assured that what seems to be bread is not bread, though it tastes like it, but it is the Body of Christ. What seems to be wine is not wine, though it tastes like it, but the Blood of Christ. Of this David sang of old, ‘And bread strengthens man’s heart, to make his face cheerful with oil’ (Psalm 104:15 LXX). It ‘strengthens your heart’ as you partaking of it as spiritual, and ‘makes the face of your soul to shine’. Having this unveiled with a pure conscience, may you ‘reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord, and proceed from glory to glory’” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Husbands Need to Sanctify Their Wives

A good marriage means servitude and dedication to holiness, husband to wife and vice versa, where each considers the other as better than himself/herself (Philippians 2:3). A bad marriage is one in which husband and wife cannot sanctify, but only mutually destroy each other.

Just as Christ sanctified His disciples, husbands are directed to pay attention to presenting their wives holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:27) and giving himself up in order to accomplish this (Ephesians 5:25). Wives are instructed to be willing to receive this holiness; that is to submit to their husband’s efforts (Ephesians 5:22-24), just as the Church submits to Christ. Thus both husband and wife have roles to play in this life that are analogous to the relationship of Christ with the Church. These roles are confined to this present age, however.

To see this, consider the question posed to Jesus by the Sadducees and Jesus’ answer: they posed a situation where one woman was widowed six times and remarried six times. Therefore, they asked, whose wife would she be in the Resurrection (Luke 20:28-33)? Jesus replied that in the Resurrection, people do not marry but “are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the Resurrection” (Luke 20:35-36). In the Body of Christ, Paul wrote that, “There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male or female; for you are all one in Christ” (Galatians 3:28).

Part of the mystery of the roles we play as husband and wife can be thought of as a instruction for the benefit of our children, our neighbors and the world. Husbands demonstrate how Christ treats the Church by how they treat their wives; and, by doing so, husbands also teach their wives how to love the Lord – thus sanctifying, cleansing and presenting her holy. Wives demonstrate how the Church responds to Christ by how they respond to their husbands; and, by doing so, wives also teach their husbands how to be obedient to the Will of God in everything. Even atheists, who are faithful to their spouses, demonstrate this to themselves in some way! Many people lose sight of this today and see only that their spouse isn’t perfect; therefore they feel a need to assume their spouse’s role, women becoming manlier and men becoming more effeminate. In contrast to this, the Orthodox wedding includes a crowning, where the crowns the bride and groom receive represent martyrs’ crowns to signify their life toward each other. This will not be necessary in the Resurrection; one will not need to teach anyone about knowing the Lord, “For they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Jeremiah 31:34).

John Chrysostom encouraged³² his people to sanctify their wives by seeking beauty of soul in her, not just beauty in appearance. Everyone has spots, wrinkles and blemishes on their soul; these are the things that matter and the things that God sees. We should encourage affection, modesty and gentleness, which make up true beauty of soul.

“Don’t turn your back on your wife because of some deformity. Listen to the Scripture, ‘The bee is small among flying creatures, but her product is the best of sweet things’ (Ecclesiasticus 11:3). Your wife is of God’s fashioning; when you criticize her, you criticize Him that made her. What can a woman do for her beauty? Praise, hatred and love based on personal beauty belong to immoral souls. Seek beauty of soul and imitate the Bridegroom of the Church. Outward beauty is full of conceit and great license, and throws men into jealousy; it often makes you suspect monstrous things. There may be pleasure for the first or second month; perhaps for at most the first year, but then no longer; familiarity diminishes it. Meanwhile the evils which came from the beauty last: the pride, folly, contempt. The love that began on just grounds still continues ardent, since its object is beauty of soul and not of body.”

“Let us seek in a wife: affection, modesty, gentleness; these are the characteristics of beauty. Loveliness of person let us not seek, nor scold her on the points over which she has no power. Rather, let us not scold at all, since this is rudeness, nor let us be impatient. Do you notice how many, after living with beautiful wives, have ended their lives pitifully, and how many, who have lived with those of no great beauty, have run on to extreme old age with great enjoyment? Let us wipe off the ‘spot’ that is within, smooth the ‘wrinkles’ that are within, do away with the ‘blemishes’ that are on the soul. Such is the beauty God requires. Let us make her beautiful in God’s sight, not in our own. Let us not look for wealth or that high-birth which is outward, but for that true nobility which is in the soul. Let no one endure to get rich by a wife; for such riches are ugly. ‘They that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition’ (1 Timothy 6:9). Don’t seek in your wife abundance of wealth, and you shall find everything else go well. Who overlooks the most important things to acquire those which are of little value? If we have a son, we sometimes concern ourselves not how he may be made virtuous, but how we may get a rich wife; not how he may be well-mannered, but well-moneyed. We think like a businessman; we inquire not how we may be free of sin, but how we may acquire the most profit. Everything has become money; thus everything is corrupted and ruined, because that passion possesses us.”

Gregory the Theologian opposed³³ one standard for men and another one for women; if they are one flesh, they should have equal honor. However, the wife should reverence Christ through her husband and the husband should honor the Church through his wife.

“If you inquire into the matter: the woman sinned, and so did Adam. The serpent deceived them both; and one was not found to be the stronger and the other the weaker. Do you consider one better? Christ saves both by His Passion. Was He made flesh for the man only? He was also made flesh for the woman. Did He die for the man only? The woman also is saved by His death. He is called of the seed of David; do you think that the man is honored by this? He is

³² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XX, vv. 26-27.

³³ Gregory Nazianzen, Oration on the Words of Matthew 19:1, XXXVII, 7.

also born of a Virgin, and this is on the woman's side. 'The two', He says, 'shall be one flesh' (Ephesians 5:31); so let the one flesh have equal honor. Paul legislates for chastity by His example. 'This Sacrament is great', he says, 'but I speak concerning Christ and the Church' (Ephesians 5:32). It is well for the wife to reverence Christ through her husband; and it is well for the husband to honor the Church through his wife. 'Let the wife', he says, 'see that she respect her husband', for so she does Christ; but also he asks the husband to cherish his wife (Ephesians 5:33), for so Christ does the Church."

John Chrysostom gave³⁴ some advice on how to maintain a loving household. If we despise money, look primarily to excellence of soul and keep the respect of God before us, we will be thoughtful and considerate of everyone around us.

"Let us be very thoughtful both for our wives, children, and servants; knowing that we shall be establishing an easy government for ourselves, and make our relationship with them gentle and lenient. Say, 'Here am I, and the children whom the Lord has given me' (Isaiah 8:18). If the husband commands respect, and the head is honorable, then the rest of the body will sustain no violence. Paul states accurately the wife's and the husband's fitting behavior; he charges her to respect him as the head, and him to love her as a wife; but how can these things be? That they ought to be, he has proved. They will be so (1) if we despise money, (2) if we look to one thing only, excellence of soul, and (3) if we keep the respect of God before our eyes. What Paul says to servants, 'Whatever any man does, whether it be good or evil, the same shall he receive from the Lord' (Ephesians 6:8); this is also the case here in husband-wife relations. Love her therefore not for her sake so much as for Christ's sake. This Paul intimates, in saying, 'as unto the Lord' (Ephesians 6:7). Do everything, as in obedience to the Lord, and as doing everything for His sake. Don't believe anyone who slanders the husband to his wife. Let the husband not believe anything at random against his wife, nor let the wife be overly inquisitive about her husband's going in and out. Let the husband not ever render himself worthy of any suspicion."

Chrysostom also compared³⁵ the state of the Church as the bride of Christ when He came to take her as His wife. Her surpassing ugliness and impurity were far greater than any man would accept for a wife; yet Christ came for her as if she were wonderfully beautiful.

"Whatever kind of wife men shall take, no one could take such a bride as the Church, when Christ took her. No bride could be so far removed from a man as the Church was from Christ; yet He did not loathe her for her surpassing deformity. Paul described her deformity, 'You were once darkness' (Ephesians 5:8). Note the blackness of her hue; what is blacker than darkness? Look also at her boldness, 'living in malice and envy' (Titus 3:3). Look again at her impurity, 'disobedient, foolish'. Though her blemishes were extensive, yet He gave Himself up for her in her deformity, as for one in the bloom of youth, dearly loved, and of wonderful beauty. In admiration of this Paul said, 'Scarcely for a righteous man will one die' (Romans 5:7); and again, 'in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (Romans 5:8). In spite of this, He took her, arrayed her in beauty, washed her, and didn't refuse to give Himself for her."

³⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XX, v. 33.

³⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XX, v. 26.

Members of His Body

Paul addressed³⁶ the Christians in Corinth to assure them that no one was unimportant and insignificant. Just like the human body, all parts of the body serve some purpose; the body is not the same without all its members. A single member of the human body or even a group of members can't make a normal human body; similarly the Church. This body of the Church is called by the Name of its head: i.e. Christ.

“Paul was struggling to prove that in the Church, no one was unneeded; this was calculated to refresh the weak by the example of the body. Nothing so consoles the person of small spirit and inferior gifts, or so persuades him to be content, as being convinced that he has his role. Therefore Paul made this point, ‘the body is one and has many members’”.

“For none of the members by themselves can make a body, but each is alike deficient. There is need of a coming together. The eye is as much a part of the body as is the foot in regard to its being a member and constituting a body; there is no difference in this respect.”

“Paul added, ‘the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12)’, when he might have said, ‘the many are one body, so also is the Church’. Although this was what naturally followed, he does not say it but instead of it places the name of Christ, elevating the reasoning and appealing more to the hearer’s reverence. His meaning is this: ‘As the body and the head are one man, so he said that the Church and Christ are one’. Therefore he placed Christ instead of the Church, giving that Name to His body”.

John of Damascus defined³⁷ the Eucharist as the first-fruits of that future bread, which is life-giving spirit. We all become one body of Christ and members of one another through it.

“The bread of the Eucharist is the first-fruits of the future bread which is necessary for existence. It is thus fitting to speak so of the Lord’s body; for the Lord’s flesh is life-giving spirit because it was conceived of the life-giving Spirit. What is born of the Spirit is spirit. But I do not say this to take away the nature of the body, but I wish to make clear its life-giving and divine power. But if some persons called the bread and the wine antitypes of the body and blood of the Lord, as did the divinely inspired Basil, they said so not after the consecration but before the consecration, so calling the offering itself.

Participation is spoken of; for through it we partake of the Divinity of Jesus. Communion, too, is spoken of, and it is an actual communion, because through it we have communion with Christ and share in His flesh and His Divinity. We have communion and are united with one another through it. Since we partake of one bread, we all become one body of Christ and one blood, and members of one another.”

John Chrysostom came out³⁸ really hard against anything that disturbs the members of Christ. Marriage to an idolater is better than a marriage with adultery present; it is impossible for an adulterer to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not just the husband and wife involved; the adulterer joins Christ to the harlot. Chrysostom asked adulterers not even to come to Church, since they would pollute the Church.

³⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXX, 1.

³⁷ John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, IV, 13.

³⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXIII, 4.

“Paul exhorts, ‘Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord’ (Hebrews 12:14). By ‘holiness’, he means chastity, so that each man ought to be content with his own wife, and not have to do with any other woman; for it is impossible that one not so contented should be saved. He will perish even though he has ten thousand right actions, since with adultery it is impossible to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Christ said concerning these, ‘Their worm shall not die, and the fire shall not be quenched’ (Mark 9:44-48). He can have no pardon, who after possessing the comfort of a wife, then acts shamelessly towards another woman. If many abstain even from their wives during a season of fast or prayer (1 Corinthians 7:4), how great a fire does he heap up for himself who is not even content with his wife, but pursues another. If it is not permitted one who has put away his own wife to be joined with another, (for this is adultery,) how great evil does he commit who, while his wife is in his house, brings in another. Let no one allow this illness to dwell in his soul; let him tear it up by the root. He does not so much wrong his wife as himself. So grievous and unpardonable is this offense, that if a woman separates herself from a husband who is an idolater without his consent, God punishes her; but if she separates herself from a fornicator, not so. ‘If any faithful woman has a husband that doesn’t believe, if he is pleased to dwell with her, let her not divorce him’ (1 Corinthians 7:13). Not so concerning a harlot! ‘If any man puts away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, he causes her to commit adultery’ (Matthew 5:32). If the coming together makes one body, he who comes together with a harlot must become one body with her. How then shall the modest woman, being a member of Christ, receive such a one, or how shall she join to herself the member of an harlot? Observe how the one (fornication) is worse than the other (idolatry). The woman who dwells with an unbeliever is not impure; ‘for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife’ (1 Corinthians 7:14). Not so with the harlot! ‘Shall I then make the members of Christ the members of an harlot?’ (1 Corinthians 6:15) In the one case sanctification remains, and is not removed though the unbeliever dwells with his wife; but in the other case it departs. Fornication is a dreadful thing, and an agent for everlasting punishment; even in this world it brings with it hardship. The man so guilty is forced to lead a life of anxiety; he is no better off than those who are under punishment, creeping into another man’s house with fear and much trembling. I exhort you to be freed from this illness; and if you don’t obey, don’t step on the sacred threshold. Sheep that are covered with scab and full of disease, may not be in the same herd with those that are healthy; we must drive them from the fold until they get rid of the illness. We have been made members of Christ; let us not become members of a harlot.”

Irenaeus of Lyons summarized³⁹ the importance and the benefits of the Eucharist. It is a continuous cycle of bread and wine made from wheat and grapes that receives the Word of God and nourishes us as members of His body. We in turn are sown like wheat into the ground and complete the cycle. Like the wheat, we also will rise at our appointed time.

“When the mingled cup and the manufactured bread receives the Word of God, and the Eucharist of the blood and the body of Christ is made, the substance of our flesh is nourished, increased and supported. How can anyone say that the flesh is incapable of receiving the gift of God, which is life eternal, when the flesh is nourished from the body and blood of the Lord, and is a member of Him? Paul

³⁹ Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, V, ii, 3.

declares, ‘We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones’ (Ephesians 5:30). He does not speak these words of some spiritual and invisible man, for a spirit doesn’t have bones or flesh. Paul of course refers to the Incarnation, by which the Lord became an actual man, consisting of flesh, nerves, and bones.

A cutting from the vine planted in the ground grows⁴⁰ and produces fruit in its season and a grain of wheat falling into the earth and becoming decomposed, rises with great increase by the Spirit of God. Through the wisdom of God, this serves for the use of men; having received the Word of God, the vine and the wheat becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ. So also our bodies, being nourished by it, are deposited in the earth, suffer decomposition there, and shall rise at their appointed time. The Word of God grants them resurrection to the glory of God the Father, who freely gives to this mortal immortality, and to this corruptible incorruption, because the strength of God is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). We should never become puffed up, as if we had life from ourselves, or exalted against God, with our minds becoming ungrateful. We should learn by experience that we possess eternal duration from the excelling power of this Being, not from our own nature. We should neither undervalue that glory which surrounds God as He is, nor be ignorant of our own nature. We can know what God can do, and what benefits man receives, and thus never wander from the true comprehension of things as they are regarding God and man. God permitted our resolution into dust, that we might be instructed by every aspect and be accurate in all things, being ignorant neither of God nor of ourselves?”

Submission

Paul stated, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:22-24). Paul’s words have been twisted and misinterpreted in our generation more than most of his teaching on other subjects. In an age of the liberation of women, Paul’s words are often interpreted as a put-down of women.

When we think of submission, we don’t usually think in terms of Christ to the Father, but we more often think in terms of a slave to a master. Christ’s relationship to the Father is not one of slave to master, but of equal to equal, where He submits to the Father out of His own free will, not out of necessity. Paul is saying the same thing regarding husbands and wives: they are equals, but he is asking the wife to submit to her husband out of her own free will, and not out of a sense of inferiority. In terms of relationships, this is a huge difference. We don’t ridicule Christ as a lesser deity because He submits to the Father out of His own free will. Similarly for a wife to submit to her husband out of her own free will is not a put-down at all.

⁴⁰ Some plants reproduce from seeds, others from cuttings. Grapevines do both. To grow a grapevine from a short cutting off a fresh branch, there needs to be a couple of bud locations on the cutting. If one bud location is placed below ground, roots will grow from that location. If another bud location is above ground, branches will grow from that location.

John Chrysostom stated⁴¹ that wives will become obedient to their husbands if their husbands treat them as Christ did the Church. Christ showed extraordinary love to the Church, even though she hated Him; He respected her and treated her as a free woman, not as a slave.

“Do you want your wife to be obedient to you, as the Church is to Christ? Take the same providential care for her, as Christ takes for the Church! Even if you need to give your life for her, and to endure and undergo any suffering whatever, don’t refuse it. Though you should undergo all this, yet you will not have done anything like Christ. You are doing it for someone to whom you are already knit; but He did it for someone who turned her back on Him and hated Him. Though you see her looking down on you with contempt and scorning you, yet by your great thoughtfulness for her, by affection, by kindness, you will be able to lay her at your feet. There is nothing more powerful to govern than the bonds of marriage. One may be able to hold down a servant by fear; but he will soon run away and be gone. But the partner of one’s life, the mother of one’s children, the foundation of one’s every joy, one ought never to chain down by fear and threats, but with love and good disposition. What sort of union is it, where the wife trembles at her husband? What sort of pleasure will the husband himself enjoy, if he dwells with his wife as with a slave, and not as with a free-woman? Though you should suffer anything on her account, do not criticize her; for neither did Christ do this.”

The Introduction of Submission to Mankind

Adam and Eve had been established in Eden, the Paradise of God, among every tree that was beautiful and edible. There, the Lord planted the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam’s job in Eden was to cultivate it and guard it. Cultivation was not difficult since there were no thorns or briars. The only thing to guard was the Law that God gave him (Genesis 2:16-17). Tertullian described⁴² the Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) as having been given in embryo to Adam in Eden. Clothed in the glory of God, theirs was a trouble-free life similar to that of the angels. This is similar to the life of the righteous after the Lord returns, where they will shine with the glory of God (Daniel 12:3, Matthew 13:43). Blessed and created in His image, Adam began his rule over the earth and all things on the earth (Genesis 1:27-30).

Adam and Eve could eat freely from any of the trees in Eden, except one. God set this up as a test for their faith. God, in His Goodness, gave them all of Paradise so that they were under no constraint to transgress the Law. In His justice, He wanted to give them immortal life from eating of the Tree of Life. If they would willingly reject the temptation to disobey the Lord’s commandments, and reject the serpent along with sin, they would have eaten from the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge would not have been withheld from them. In order that Adam would have to go out of his way to do this, the temptation came via a serpent, which was utterly despicable and hideous, rather than via an angel or some other attractive being. In order that hunger would not be the temptation, temptation came before they knew what hunger was. Therefore, it was out of their own avarice that they followed the counsel⁴³ of the serpent. If they had been victorious in this one momentary battle, they would have had⁴³ by Justice all that had been given to them by Grace.

⁴¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XX, v. 25.

⁴² Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, I, iii, 2.

⁴³ Ephraim the Syrian, Commentary on Genesis.

In tempting Eve, Satan told her that if she ate of the Tree of Knowledge, she would obtain divinity and know good and evil. But Eve already knew good and evil from the commandments of God. Had she wanted to discern the evil intent of the serpent's words, she could have done so. But she was puffed up with the hope of equality with God apart from God's commandments. She then took the fruit to Adam and persuaded him to eat also and join her rebellion; Adam listened to his wife rather than to God. In doing so they lost the glory of God with which they were clothed and only then realized that they were naked. By promising them divinity, the serpent, which they were created to rule over, prevented them from receiving divinity. By denying Him who had made them ruler over everything, they put their faith in the crafty one, who took away their rule completely. By succumbing to the serpent's craftiness, Adam and Eve lost those things that they should not have lost even in a great battle.

While Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves to cover their nakedness, the Lord delayed His coming down to them so that they might admonish each other and plead for mercy. When He did come to them, He purposefully endowed sound to His footsteps so that Adam and Eve might be prepared to make supplication before Him. Instead Adam and Eve hid, and when confronted, Adam refused to confess but blamed the woman. Eve did so also and blamed the serpent (Genesis 3:8-13). Both Adam and Eve were without excuse for they had knowingly neglected the Lord's commandment out of the avarice of their own hearts. No one forced or pressured them; they chose and decided for themselves.

After the Fall, the serpent was cursed beyond all the other creatures. Eve was cursed with pain in childbirth and in being subject to her husband. Adam was cursed with hard labor in working the ground from which he came (Genesis 3:14-19). In each of these, the Lord's love is apparent in that the punishment is a continual guidance of the magnitude of the Fall. In order that this cursed state of suffering might not be eternal, the Lord withheld the Tree of Life and sent them away from Eden. The Lord also made them garments of animal skin, teaching them about animal sacrifice that would later be written down in detail by Moses, and which illustrated to them what would be fulfilled by Christ, the Lamb of God.

We might note first that when Eve was created from Adam's rib (Genesis 2:21-23), she was not "subject" to her husband. As Adam and Eve had the rule over the Garden and over all the other creatures, Eve was not "subject" to her husband either. It was only after the Fall that this was ordered. In His love for mankind, God seems to be ordering this relationship to protect women, since they can be more trusting and thus more easily ripped off by deceivers.

Christ Submits to the Father

Just before the Crucifixion, praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said, "Father, if it is Your Will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My Will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus' human will, which is part of His humanity, submitted itself to the Will of God the Father. A little before this Jesus said, "The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works" (John 14:10).

Ambrose of Milan noted⁴⁴ the depth of Christ's submission to the Will of the Father. While He is equal to the Father in His Divinity, He is in complete submission in His humanity. Even today, as we serve our fellow men, who are sick and in prison, we serve Christ, Who

⁴⁴ Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, V, xiv, 171, 176-178.

submits in His humanity to the conditions of our earthly existence as He lives in us. This is a very interesting observation by Ambrose that we don't hear much about today.

“Consider the subjection of the Son to the Father. He said, ‘If it is Your Will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done’ (Luke 22:42). His subjection was in His human nature; as we read, ‘Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death’ (Philippians 2:8). The subjection was that of obedience: that of death; the subjection therefore is the subjection of the assumed humanity. In the Godhead, however, there is no weakness.”

“Paul said, ‘That God may be all and in all’ (1 Corinthians 15:28); this applies to the unity and equality of Christ with God the Father, for the Son is not separated from the Father. In like manner as the Father works all and in all, so also Christ works all in all. If Christ also works all in all, He is not subjugated in the glory of the Godhead. He is subjugated in us, in that He was made lower than the angels, in the sacrament of His body.”

“How was Christ subjugated in us? He Himself shows us, ‘I was in prison, and you came to Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these you have done it to Me’ (Matthew 25:36). You hear of Him in subjection, and are moved, though He is sick and weak in him in whom He is in subjection, in whom He was made sin and a curse for us.”

“He was made sin and a curse not on His own account but on ours; so He was subjugated in us not for His own sake but for ours, being not in subjection in His eternal Nature, nor accursed in His eternal Nature. ‘For cursed is every one that hangs on a tree’ (Galatians 3:13). Cursed He was, for He bore our curses; in subjection He was, for He took on Him our subjection, but in the assumption of the form of a servant, not in the glory of God. While he makes Himself a partaker of our weakness in the flesh, He makes us partakers of the divine Nature in His power. Neither in one nor the other have we any natural fellowship with the heavenly Generation of Christ, nor is there any subjection of the Godhead in Christ. On Him through that flesh which is the pledge of our salvation, we sit in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6), though certainly not sitting by ourselves; so also He is said to be subjugated in us through the assumption of our nature.”

Paul also stated, speaking of Christ, “To Him every knee shall bow, of those in heaven, of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11). Gregory of Nyssa summarized⁴⁵ what Paul meant by this:

“Paul speaks of the subjection of all men to God, when we all, being united to one another by the Faith, become one body of the Lord, Who is in all, as the subjection of the Son to the Father. Then the adoration paid to the Son by all things with one accord, by things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, overflows to the glory of the Father. When this takes place, Paul declares that the Son, Who is in all, is subject to the Father by virtue of the subjection of those in whom He is.”

All Mankind Will Submit to Christ

⁴⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius, II, 14.

Paul said, ‘When all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all’ (1 Corinthians 15:28). Ambrose of Milan stated⁴⁶ that all things are not now subject to Christ, but they will be at some time. The Lord Himself has said, ‘Take My yoke upon you’ (Matthew 11:29). It is not the fierce that bears the yoke, but the humble and the gentle. All things were not made subject before, for they had not yet received the wisdom of God, not did they yet wear the easy yoke of the Word on the neck as it were of their mind. ‘But as many as received Him’, as it is written, ‘to them He gave the right to become children of God’ (John 1:12).

Someone might say that Christ is now made subject, because many have believed. Not so! Christ’s subjection lies not in a few but in all. I am not brought into subjection, if the flesh in me still lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh (Galatians 5:17). I am in part subdued; the whole Church is the one body of Christ; we divide Christ as long as the human race disagrees. Therefore Christ is not yet made subject, for His members are not yet brought into subjection. But when we have become one spirit, not many members, then He also will become subject, in order that through His subjection ‘God may be all and in all’”.

Since Christ is not yet made subject, the work of God is not yet perfected; for the Son of God said, ‘My food is to do the will of My Father that sent Me, and to finish His work’ (John 4:34). Because I myself am not yet perfect, I make the work of God to be unfinished. That is not a matter of me doing something wrong; it is a matter of a lack of grace. In so far as we are made subject, it is to our profit that we are made subject to the Law, that we are made subject to grace. The wisdom of the flesh was at enmity with God, for it is not subject to the Law (Romans 8:7).

The Saints Discipline Their Bodies into Subjection

The Apostle Paul was known to exhibit the words of Christ speaking through him (2 Corinthians 13:3). Yet he admitted, “The good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil that I will not *to do*, that I do” (Romans 7:19). Paul also said, “Therefore I discipline my body and bring it into subjection lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:27). If Paul is fearful about not being able to keep his body in subjection, we should be also. And if our entire life is one of keeping our body in subjection, why should we be overly concerned about submission to one another? Jerome stated⁴⁷ that part of Paul’s problem was that he struggled greatly against sensual passion, and he needed to discipline himself.

“Paul disciplined his body and brought it into subjection, lest having preached to others he might himself become disqualified. Heated with the violence of sensual passion he made himself the spokesman of the human race. ‘O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?’ (Romans 7:24) Again, ‘I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do’ (Romans 7:19). And once more, ‘Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you’” (Romans 8:8-9).

⁴⁶ Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, V, xiii, 166-169.

⁴⁷ Jerome, Letter to Demetrius, CXXX, 9.

Our Bodies Are Not Our Own

Paul spoke about the seriousness of fornication, where prostitution results in joining Christ to the prostitute. “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two’, He says, ‘shall become one flesh’. But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:15-17). The message is that our bodies are not our own; we have been bought with a price.

There is a similar relationship between husband and wife: just as our bodies are not our own with respect to Christ, our bodies are not our own with respect to each other either. Following the same thought as our relationship with Christ, Paul said, “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not defraud one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (1 Corinthians 7:4-5).

John Chrysostom emphasized⁴⁸ how our bodies are not our own between husband and wife. This applies to our bodies as well as our property. To violate this is sin and fraud.

“When therefore you see a prostitute tempting you, say, ‘My body is not mine, but my wife’s’. The same also let the woman say to those who would undermine her chastity, ‘My body is not mine, but my husband’s’. Now if neither husband nor wife has power even over their own body, much less have they over their property. Listen all that have husbands and all that have wives: if you must not count your body your own, much less your money.”

“There is great equality of honor, and no special rights. Paul said, ‘Do not defraud one another except with consent’ (1 Corinthians 7:5). What does this mean? ‘Let not the wife’, he says, ‘exercise abstinence, if the husband is unwilling; nor the husband without the wife’s consent’. Great evils spring from this sort of abstinence, such as adultery, fornication and the ruin of families. If when men have their own wives, they commit fornication, much more if you defraud them of this consolation. Paul speaks well when he says, ‘Do not defraud’, and ‘debt’, that he might show the strictness of the right of dominion in question. It is fraud for one to practice abstinence against the will of the other; but not so, with the other’s consent. He only defrauds who takes something against another’s will and by force. Many women do this, working sin rather than righteousness, and thereby becoming accountable for the husband’s uncleanness, and tearing everything apart. They should value harmony above all things, since this is more important than everything.”

John Chrysostom had⁴⁹ some practical advice for husbands and wives regarding their relationship with each other and with God. Wives should submit to their husbands because this comes naturally and it makes them, not their husbands, look good. Husbands should love their wives without bitterness or fighting, since infighting with your own members is the worst kind. From being loved, the wife becomes loving; from being submissive, the wife causes the husband to become yielding. This is a good picture of our relationship with Christ.

⁴⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XIX, 2.

⁴⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, X, vv. 18-19.

“Paul said, ‘Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord’ (Colossians 3:18). Wives, submit for God’s sake, because this adorns you, not your husband. I don’t mean that kind of subjection which is due to a master, nor that which is natural, but that for God’s sake.”

“Paul said, ‘Husbands, love your wives, and don’t be bitter toward them’ (Colossians 3:19). Again Paul has exhorted reciprocity. He directed that there should be fear and love. It is possible for one who loves to be bitter. Don’t fight, he said; nothing is bitterer than fighting on the part of the husband toward the wife. Fighting is bitter when it happens between dearly loved persons; Paul shows that it comes from great bitterness, when anyone has differences with his own member. To love therefore is the husband’s part, to yield pertains to the wife. If each one contributes his own part, everything goes well. From being loved, the wife becomes loving; from her being submissive, the husband becomes yielding. It has been naturally ordered that the one should love, the other obey. When the party governing loves the governed, then everything goes well. Love from the governed is not so requisite, as from the governing towards the governed; for from the governed obedience is due. The woman has beauty, and the man desire; for the sake of love it has been made this way. Because your wife submits to you, do not act like a tyrant; because your husband loves you, do not become puffed up. Don’t let the husband’s love elate the wife, nor the wife’s submission puff up the husband. Christ asks her to submit to you, that she may be loved more. Christ has made you to be loved, O wife, that you may easily submit. Do not fear in submitting to him; for submission to one that loves you has no hardship. Do not fear in loving her, for you have her yielding. In no other way could a bond have been. The husband has his authority proceed naturally; maintain also the bond that proceeds from love.”

Union with Christ

In terms of Union with Christ, just as husband and wife become one flesh (Ephesians 5:28-31), so those in the Church are members of Christ’s body (Ephesians 5:30), where Christ is the head (Ephesians 5:23). The different members of this body have different roles, but all the roles serve a purpose as directed by the Head (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). Like the grapevine, the body of Christ is all one plant. As in Christian marriage, we are joined to Christ as body to head, creating one new body. With this as a background, let us look at the Ephesians 4.

Walking Worthy of Our Calling

Paul stated, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:1-4).

Paul had just finished saying in the previous chapter that he prays (Ephesians 3:14) to God the Father that He would grant:

- That they be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16).
- That Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:17).

- That they be rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:17).
- That they be able to comprehend (by revelation) the width, length, depth and height (Ephesians 3:18).
- That they might know the love of Christ which far surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3:19).
- That they might be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19).

This is a lot! Having said this, Paul then said that God is able to do abundantly above all that we even ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). The only way all the above can be contained is in the Body of Christ.

What Is the One Hope of Christ's Calling?

If our entire life revolves around Christ's calling, since we are one body with Him, we might ask what Christ's calling is. Paul suggested that we understand what Christ's calling is, since we are part of it. He asked that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, as the eyes of your understanding are enlightened. We can know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power" (Ephesians 1:17-19).

Basil the Great stated⁵⁰ that our calling is to be made like God; but this is a difficult task and much instruction is required.

"Those who are idle in the pursuit of the true Faith lack the ability to count the terms that are of primary importance in theology, and to trace out the hidden meaning in every phrase and in every syllable. But those who get knowledge of the 'mark' of our 'calling' are distinguished by these abilities. What is set before us is, so far as is possible with human nature, to be made like God. Now without knowledge there can be no making like; and knowledge is not obtained without lessons. Truth is always a quarry hard to hunt, and therefore we must look everywhere for its tracks. The acquisition of the true Faith is just like that of crafts; both grow bit by bit; apprentices must despise nothing."

We are called to be made like God; therefore "not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1 Corinthians 1:26). This is a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace (2 Timothy 1:9). Those called are called to be saints (Romans 1:6), and we are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). We receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15) and we are named by Christ's Name (James 2:7).

Since everything moves according to God's agenda, God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27). Since we are part of Christ's calling, it is not our works, but His grace that achieves results. He "has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. This has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Timothy 1:9-10).

⁵⁰ Basil the Great, On the Spirit, I, 2.

John Chrysostom noted⁵¹ that there was great wisdom and power with God's approach. Using primarily untrained men, He surpassed the best that the strength and wisdom of the world could offer. The most difficult task was to convince uneducated men regarding great things that are hard to understand.

“Paul shows that it was expedient to avoid focusing on the wisdom of this world. ‘Seeing that in the wisdom of God, the world didn't know God, and God was well pleased through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe’ (1 Corinthians 1:21). The Cross is a demonstration of incredible power and wisdom, showing that the foolishness of God is far mightier than the wisdom of man. This Paul proves not by means of the teachers, but by means of the disciples themselves. Look at their calling; not only untrained teachers, but untrained disciples also were objects of His choice. He chose ‘not many wise men according to the flesh’ (1 Corinthians 1:26). These untrained men surpassed both the strength and wisdom of the world. This convinced both the many and the unwise. In this regard it was extremely hard to convince an ignorant person, especially when the topic concerns great and necessary things. However, they were convinced and Paul calls the Corinthians themselves as witnesses. ‘Look at your calling, brethren’ Paul said, ‘consider and examine’. Teaching that was so wise that it can be received by ordinary men testifies about the greatest wisdom in the teacher. When Paul said, ‘according to the flesh’, he meant according to what is in sight; according to the life that now is; according to the discipline of the Gentiles.”

Chrysostom also stated⁵² that God is glorified when His servants don't yield in the face of suffering. Others may be called, but are rejected, where the calling is to the bridal chamber with the Bridegroom. There may be other callings, but this is the most important one.

“When those are brought into public view, who have suffered countless misfortune, designed to make them apostate from the faith, and yet have not yielded, but have believed, God is glorified. Then the glory of these people will be shown. ‘Judge no one blessed’, it says, ‘before his death’ (Ecclesiasticus 11:28). On this account he says, in that day those who believed will be revealed. ‘To which end we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power’ (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

“He who was clothed in filthy garments was called also, but did not remain in his calling, and for this reason was the more rejected. The calling is to the bride-chamber, since the five virgins also were called. ‘Arise’ it says, ‘the bridegroom comes’ (Matthew 25:6); they prepared themselves, but did not enter in. He speaks of the calling of the five wise virgins, showing what calling he is speaking of, ‘Fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power’ (2 Thessalonians 1:11). This is the calling that we seek! Notice how gently he takes them down. In order that they may not become vain and slothful by too much commendation, as if they had done great deeds, he shows that something still is lacking to them, so long as they are in this life. He also said this to the Hebrews, ‘You have not yet resisted to blood, striving against sin’ (Hebrews 12:4). Paul's gratification, persuasion and full assurance was that the

⁵¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, V, 1-2

⁵² John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Thessalonians, III, v. 11.

persuasion of God may be fulfilled, that nothing may be lacking to the Corinthians, and that they may do as He wills.”

Chrysostom further stated⁵³ that the hope of our calling is all about good works, where good works are something that we should walk in to our dying day, since we need a virtue that will last. It is like we are traveling on a road leading to a royal city. When we have passed over the greater part of it, if we were to droop and sit down near the end, the travel would be of no use to us.

Paul stated, ‘But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus’ (Philippians 3:13-14). Chrysostom continued⁵⁴ to say that what made Paul reach forward to the things which are ahead was his forgetting the things that are behind. He who thinks that everything is accomplished, and that nothing is lacking to him for the perfecting of virtue, may cease running, as having obtained everything. But he who thinks that he is still distant from the goal, will never cease running. This then we should always consider, even though we have done ten thousand good deeds.

Our Calling is Irrevocable

Speaking of the 1st Century Jews, who were the enemies of the Church, and who incited the Romans into persecution of the Church, Paul stated that the mercy of God still extended to them because of their righteous forefathers.

“I do not desire, brethren that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, where blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written, ‘The Deliverer⁵⁵ will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this *is* My covenant with them, When I take away their sins’. Concerning the Gospel *they are* enemies for your sake, but concerning the election *they are* beloved for the sake of the fathers. The gifts and the calling of God *are* irrevocable” (Romans 11:25-29).

Athanasius of Alexandria stated⁵⁶ that we are in the Father because of Christ and the Holy Spirit. If we repent after we fall, we stay there; if we don’t, the Holy Spirit deserts us. In this manner the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable; He will never abandon us, but we are able to desert Him if we so choose.

“Christ said of us, ‘As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us’ (John 17:21); this does not mean that we were to have identity with Him. It is a request to the Father that the Spirit should be granted through Him to those who believe, where we are found to be in God through the Spirit, and in this respect to be joined to Him. Since the Word is in the Father, and the Spirit is given from the Word, He wills that we should receive the Spirit; when we receive It, we too may be found on account of the Spirit to become One in the Word, and through Him in the Father. And if He says, ‘as we are one,’ this again is only a request that such grace of the Spirit as is given to the disciples may be

⁵³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, IV, v. 10.

⁵⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians, XII, vv. 13-14.

⁵⁵ See Isaiah 59:20, 27:9.

⁵⁶ Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses Against the Arians, III, xxv, 25.

irrevocable. For what the Word has by nature in the Father, that He wishes to be given to us through the Spirit irrevocably. Knowing this, Paul said, ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?’ ‘The gifts of God’ and ‘the grace of His calling are irrevocable’ (Romans 11:26).’ It is the Spirit then which is in God, and not us viewed in our own selves. As we are sons and gods because of the Word in us, so we shall be in the Son and in the Father, and we shall be accounted to have become one in Son and in Father, because the Spirit is in us, which is in the Word, which is in the Father. When a man falls from the Spirit for any wickedness, if he repents after his fall, the grace remains irrevocably to such as are willing. Otherwise he who has fallen is no longer in God, because that Holy Spirit and Paraclete which is in God has deserted him. But the sinner shall be in him to whom he has subjected himself, as took place in Saul’s instance; for the Spirit of God departed from him and an evil spirit was afflicting him (1 Samuel 16:14 LXX). God’s enemies hearing this ought to be embarrassed, and no longer pretend themselves equal to God. But they neither understand nor endure faithful words (Proverbs 29:7 LXX loosely), but find them heavy even to hear.”

John Cassian stated⁵⁷ that Paul hurried toward the goal of the high calling of God without swerving, having fought the good fight and having won the battle by the chastisement of the flesh. A similar reward is available to all who look forward to Christ’s Coming.

“Paul did not run uncertainly, because, looking to the heavenly Jerusalem, he had a mark set, towards which his heart was swiftly directed without swerving. He did not run uncertainly, because, ‘forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus’ (Philippians 3:13-14). He directed his mental gaze, hurrying towards it with all speed of heart, and proclaimed with confidence, ‘I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith’ (2 Timothy 4:7). Because he knew he had run unwearied ‘after the fragrance of Christ’s ointment, which is better than all spices’ (Song of Solomon 1:3 LXX). He had ready devotion of heart, and had won the battle of the spiritual combat by the chastisement of the flesh; he boldly concluded, ‘There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me in that day’. In order that he might open up to us a similar hope of reward, if we desire to imitate him in the struggle of his course, he added, ‘But not to me only, but to all who love His coming’ (2 Timothy 4:8). He declared that we shall be sharers of his crown in the Day of Judgment, if we love the coming of Christ and if we gain the victory in the fight by chastising the body.”

How Do We Walk Worthy of Our Calling?

The way we walk worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1) is “with all lowliness, gentleness, long-suffering, bearing with one another” (Ephesians 4:2). John Chrysostom stated⁵⁸ that this is the basis of all virtue:

“If we are lowly, and realize what we are; if we realize how we were saved; and if we will take this recollection as a motive to all virtue, the lowly-

⁵⁷ John Cassian, *Twelve Books on the Institutes of the Coenobia*, V, 17.

⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians*, IX, v. 3.

mindful man is able to be at once generous and a grateful servant. Paul said, ‘For what do you have that you did not receive?’ (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Chrysostom continued to state⁵⁹ that those who have difficulty with this due to a demeanor that is very critical of others, they should remember:

“If you are not patient with your neighbor, how shall God be patient with you? If you don’t bear with your fellow-servant, how shall the Master bear with you? Wherever there is love, all things are to be endured”.

Some people have become lowly-minded by taking on an attitude of what might be called “worm theology.” This often expresses a great deal of piety, but also often represents merely an excuse for doing nothing. Walking worthy of our calling represents a depth of understanding accompanied by a gratitude for all the Grace given to us. If this gratitude is genuine, it will be translated into deeds.

In another place, Chrysostom said⁶⁰ that we should consider what we have been given in the Body of Christ.

“If anyone were to place a crown of gold on our head, we would do everything that we might seem worthy of the lifeless jewels? But now it is not a crown that is placed on our head, but – what is far greater – Christ has become our head. If you are the Body of Christ, bear the Cross, for He bore it; bear spitting, bear beatings, bear nails.”

John Chrysostom stated⁶¹ that faith is not sufficient for us to respond to our calling; filthy clothing, that is, lack of a pure life, will exclude us. God is not ashamed of beggars and those of low station in this life, but He brings them to His Table also. If we try to come to His Table with filthy clothing, we insult Him, the Marriage and the rest of the guests; He has no choice but to throw us out.

“There is no small fear, if we defile that beautiful robe by our sloth and transgressions, we might be cast out from the inner room and bridal chamber, like the five foolish virgins, or him who didn’t have on a wedding garment (Matthew 22:11). He too was one of the guests, for he had been invited. After the invitation and so great an honor, he behaved with insolence towards Him who had invited him; listen to what punishment he suffered, how pitiful, fit subject for many tears. When he comes to partake of that splendid Table, not only is he forbidden to have the least part, but he is bound hand and foot, and carried into outer darkness to undergo eternal wailing and gnashing of teeth. Therefore let us not expect that faith is sufficient to us for salvation. If we do not exhibit a pure life, but come clothed unworthy of this blessed calling, nothing hinders us from suffering the same as that wretched one. It is strange that He, who is God and King, is not ashamed of men who are vile, beggars, and of no reputation, but brings even those of the crossroads to that Table. We show ourselves lacking any sense, if we are not made better by so great an honor, if even after the call we remain in our old wickedness, we insolently abuse the unspeakable loving-kindness of Him who has called us. He didn’t call us to the spiritual and awesome communion of His

⁵⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, IX, v. 3.

⁶⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, IV,

⁶¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, X, 3. Chrysostom is saying here that the Protestant rallying cry of “Justification by Faith Alone” leaves out an important aspect of the Faith.

mysteries that we should enter with our former wickedness. But putting off our filthiness, we need to change our clothing to such as become those who are guests in palaces. If we do not act worthily of that calling, it no longer rests with Him who has honored us, but with ourselves; it is not He that throws us out from that admirable company of guests, but we throw ourselves out.”

“He has done His part. He has made the marriage; He has provided the Table; He has sent men to call us; He has received us when we came, and honored us with all other honor. But if we insult Him, the company, and the wedding by our filthy garments, that is, our impure actions, we are then with good cause thrown out. It is to honor the marriage and the guests, that He drives away those bold and shameless people; were He to allow those clothed in this fashion, He would be insulting the rest. May it never be that one of us experiences this from Him who has called us! To this end have all these things been written before they come to pass, that we, being sobered by the threats of the Scriptures, may not allow this disgrace and punishment to go on to the deed, but stop it at the word only. Let us each with bright apparel come to that call.”

John Cassian stated⁶² that our enemy only lays snares along the path leading to our high calling and not elsewhere. One of the more subtle of these snares is vainglory and pride at being successful in avoiding the other snares.

“When men are anxious to walk in the path of holiness and perfection, their enemies do not lay their snares to deceive them anywhere except in the way along which they walk. In accordance with this David says, ‘In the way in which I walk, they have secretly set a snare for me’ (Psalm 142:3). The snares only occur in this way of virtue along which we are walking, when we are pressing on to ‘the prize of our high calling’ (Philippians 3:14). Some become elated by their successes, and sink down, and falling with the feet of their soul entangled and caught in the snares of vainglory. Those who could not be conquered in the conflict with the enemy are overcome by the greatness of their triumph. Another kind of deception occurs when we overreach the limits of our self-restraint and fail of perseverance in our course on account of bodily weakness.”

John Chrysostom stated⁶³ that Christ’s calling to the Jewish leaders only injured them, whereas His calling to the thief saved him. The timing of the calling is important since the calling is not sufficient; our purpose is what works salvation. The calling is not compulsory; we’re not forced to accept; obedience is necessary.

“The exhibition of miracles and wisdom in Christ’s teaching only injured the Jews, as did the rightness of teaching. The Jews called Him possessed (John 8:48); when He said that He was equal to God (John 5:18), and because of the miracles, they even went about to kill Him (John 11:47, 53). But the thief, when nailed to the Cross, not only was not hurt, but even gained the greatest good from this. For those who love God all things work together for good. After mentioning this great blessing, one which far exceeds man’s nature, and seemed even past belief, he draws a proof of it from these words, ‘to those who are called according to His purpose’ (Romans 8:28). Consider from the calling, what this means. Why did He not from the first call everyone? Why did He not call Paul as soon as the rest? Does it not seem that deferring Paul’s call was harmful? But it was still

⁶² John Cassian, Twelve Books on the Institutes of the Coenobia, XI, 6.

⁶³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XV, v. 28.

by the event shown to be for the best. The purpose of the delay is that he might not ascribe everything to the calling; since in this way both Greeks and Jews would be sure to object. For if the calling alone were sufficient, how was it that all were not saved? Therefore he says that it is not the calling alone, but also the purpose of those called, that works the salvation. For the calling was not forced on them, nor was it compulsory. All were called, but all did not obey the call.”

Leo the Great stated⁶⁴ that the calling of God is the greatest gift that man can receive. In earthly families, offspring are shamed if they don't resemble their noble ancestors. Our calling as sons of God allows us to exhibit the Father's likeness, and to have Him finish all our wars for us.

“We must be worthy of our calling as sons and friends of God. The mystery of this favor is great, and this gift exceeds all other gifts: that God should call man son, and that man should name God as Father. By these terms we perceive and learn the love which reached so great a height. In natural offspring of earthly families, those who are born of noble parents are lowered by the faults of evil dealings, and unworthy offspring are put to shame by the brilliance of their ancestry. To what end will they come who, through love of the world, do not fear to be cast out from the family of Christ? If it gains the praise of men that the father's glory should shine again in their descendants, how much more glorious is it for those who are born of God to regain the brightness of their Maker's likeness and display in themselves Him Who begat them. The Lord said, ‘Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven?’ (Matthew 5:16) We know that ‘the whole world lies under the sway of the evil one’ (John 5:19), and that by the stratagems of the Devil and his angels numberless attempts are made either to frighten man in his struggle upwards by adversity or to spoil him by prosperity. But ‘greater is He that is in us, than he that is against us’ (1 John 4:4, 2 Kings 6:16), and they who have peace with God and are always saying to the Father with their whole hearts ‘Thy will be done’ (Matthew 6:10) can be overcome in no battles, can be hurt by no assaults. Blaming ourselves in our confessions and refusing our spirit's consent to our fleshly lusts, we stir up against us the enmity of him who is the author of sin. But we also secure a peace with God that nothing can destroy, by accepting His gracious service, in order that we may not only surrender ourselves in obedience to our King but also be united to Him by our free-will. If we are like-minded, if we wish what He wishes, and disapprove what He disapproves, He will finish all our wars for us. He Who gave the will, will also give the power; so that we may be fellow-workers in His works, and with the exultation of Faith may utter that prophetic song: ‘The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?’” (Psalm 27:1)

The Effects of Our Calling

If our calling is linked to Christ's calling in our quest for holiness, what are the effects of this? What do we do with our life as a result of our calling?

⁶⁴ Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, Sermons, XXVI, 4.

Using as examples slavery, circumcision and marriage, John Chrysostom encouraged⁶⁵ people to remain and blossom in the place where they were called. A life of slavery, circumcision and even marriage to an unbeliever are not hindrances to piety and thus don't affect our calling.

“As God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised, and vice versa. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called *while* a slave? Do not be concerned about it.” (1 Corinthians 7:17-21). These things contribute nothing to faith, he said. Don't be contentious or troubled; the Faith does not depend on these things.”

“Have you been called, having an unbelieving wife? Continue to be married to her. Do not cast out your wife for the Faith's sake. Have you been called, being a slave? Do not be concerned about it. Continue to be a slave. Have you been called while uncircumcised? Remain uncircumcised and vice versa. This is the meaning of, ‘As God has distributed to each man’ (1 Corinthians 7:17). These are no hindrances to piety. You are called, being a slave; another, with an unbelieving wife; another, being circumcised. Astonishing! Where does this put slavery? As circumcision doesn't profit, and uncircumcision does no harm; so neither does slavery and liberty. That he might point this out with surpassing clearness, he says, ‘But even if you can become free, rather use it’ (1 Corinthians 7:21); that is, continue as a slave. On what possible ground does he tell the person who might be set free to remain a slave? He means to point out that slavery is no harm but rather an advantage. Now we are not ignorant that some say the words, ‘rather use it’, are spoken with regard to liberty, interpreting it, ‘if you can become free, become free’. But the expression would be very contrary to Paul's manner if he intended this. When consoling the slave and signifying that he was in no respect injured, he would not have told him to get free. Someone might say, ‘What then, if I am not able to become free? I become an injured and degraded person’. This then is not what he says; he points out that a man gets nothing by being made free, ‘Though you have it in your power to be made free, remain rather in slavery’”.

John Cassian noted⁶⁶ that as we consider our calling and what we do with it, all our efforts towards godliness in this life, including dumping worldly pursuits will not help us if we don't root out anger from our life.

“The athlete of Christ ought to root out the feeling of wrath thoroughly. A sure remedy for this disease, in the first place, is making up our mind that we ought never to be angry at all, whether for good or bad reasons. If the main light of our heart has been darkened by its shadows with anger, we shall at once lose the light of discernment, the security of good counsel, our uprightness, and the temperate character of righteousness. Next, the purity of our soul will be clouded; it cannot possibly be made a temple for the Holy Spirit while the spirit of anger resides in us. Lastly, we should never pray or pour out our prayer to God while we are angry. Above all, having before our eyes the uncertain condition of mankind, we should realize daily that we are soon to depart from the body. Our

⁶⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XIX, 5.

⁶⁶ John Cassian, Institutes of the Coenobia, VII, 22.

continence and chastity, our renunciation of all our possessions, our contempt of wealth, our efforts in fasting and vigils will not help us at all, if solely on account of anger and hatred, eternal punishments are awarded to us by the judge of the world.”

John Chrysostom added⁶⁷ that in order to gain the prize of our high calling, we need to discipline anger and desire in our soul. We need to put them like well-broken horses under the yoke of reason, and then set over them the mind as a charioteer.

Chrysostom also stated⁶⁸ that some aspects of our calling are hidden to the world, but these things are revealed to the faithful.

“Paul was about to mention some things which had already come to pass, and others which had not as yet happened. He makes those which have been brought to pass, a pledge of those which have not. For example, ‘That you may know what is the hope of His calling’. It is as yet, he means, hidden, but not so to the faithful. He continues, ‘what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints’” (Ephesians 1:18).

“This too is as yet hidden. What is clear is that through His power we have believed that He has raised Christ. To persuade souls is a thing far more miraculous than to raise a dead body.”

Bearing with Each Other

Another aspect of Union with Christ deals with our getting along with one another. If our calling is linked with Christ’s calling, and we are all in this together, we need to bear with one another or we will be rejected from our calling.

As part of the Body of Christ, we need to treat each other as our Lord treats us. This means that we should regard even the least of our fellow men as the Lord Himself as He stated in His description of what He will do at Judgment Day. “The King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me’” (Matthew 25:40).

Paul stated, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:1-2). In bearing with one another Peter had asked Jesus how many times he should forgive his brother for sinning against him. Peter thought that 7 times per day was a reasonable upper limit, but Jesus upped the ante to 490 times per day (Matthew 18:22). Figuring 16 waking hours to the day, this represents our brother sinning against us every two minutes all day long. This represents a lot of long suffering on the part of the person who is the victim of the sin.

As he was being led to Rome to be eaten by lions, Ignatius of Antioch encouraged⁶⁹ his people to treat each other like they wished the Lord would treat them.

“Give heed to the bishop, that God also may give heed to you. Let my soul be exchanged for theirs that are submissive to the bishop, to the presbytery,

⁶⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XVII, Moral.

⁶⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, III, vv. 21-22.

⁶⁹ Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to Polycarp, 6.

and to the deacons; may I have my portion with them from God! Labor together with one another; strive in company together; run together; suffer together; sleep and awake together, as the stewards, and associates, and servants of God. Please Him under whom you fight, and from whom you shall receive your wages. Let none of you be found a deserter. Let your baptism endure as your arms; your faith as your helmet; your love as your spear; your patience as a complete suit of armor. Let your works be the charge assigned to you, that you may obtain for them a most worthy recompense. Be long-suffering, therefore, with one another, in meekness, and God shall be so with you. May I have joy with you forever!”

John Chrysostom had⁷⁰ some practical advice for bearing with each other: support each other in each individual’s weakness and don’t require everyone to be able to do everything. We don’t ask our feet to see and we don’t ask our hands to walk. Neither should we expect our brothers to do everything either.

“Paul said, ‘And so fulfill the law of Christ’ by the things in which you bear with one another. For example, this man is hot-tempered, you are slow to action; therefore bear with his vehemence that he in turn may bear with your sluggishness. Thus neither will he transgress, being supported by you, nor will you offend in the points where your defects lie, because of your brother’s patience with you. By reaching out a hand one to another when about to fall, you fulfill the Law in common, each completing what is lacking in his neighbor by his own endurance. But if you don’t do this, but each of you investigates the faults of his neighbor thoroughly, nothing will ever be performed by you as it ought. In the case of the body, if one were to exact the same function from every member of it, the body could never hold together; so there would have to be great dissension among brethren if we were to require all things from everyone.”

The Bond of Peace

Paul stated, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3). The “bond of peace” needs a little explanation. Peacefulness is a characteristic of the Church, but it is unlike a worldly peace. It is dependent on the love of the brethren and it can’t last if love disappears. Some people may choose to be outside the peace of God, and therefore outside the Church. The bond of peace is something that should exist between Bishops and Patriarchs, and some serious discussions have occurred when it is lacking.

Leo the Great stated⁷¹ that peacemakers, besides being sons of God, are the key in achieving the bond of peace. This peace is unlike any worldly peace, and is even unlike the peace that comes from exact likeness of mind.

“The Lord said, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God’ (Matthew 5:9). This blessedness does not belong to any and every kind of agreement and harmony, but to that of which the Apostle speaks, ‘have peace towards God (Romans 5:1); and of which the Prophet David speaks, ‘Much peace have they that love Your Law, and it is not an offense to them’ (Psalm 119:65 OSB LXX). This peace even the closest ties of friendship and the most

⁷⁰ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chapter 6, Verse 2.

⁷¹ Leo the Great, Sermons, XCV, 9.

exact likeness of mind do not really gain, if they do not agree with God's will. Similarly bad desires, crimes syndicates, and associations of vice cannot merit this peace. The love of the world does not associate with the love of God; nor does a person enter the alliance of the sons of God, who will not separate from the children of this generation. Whereas those who are always in mind with God, 'endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3), never dissent from the eternal law, uttering that prayer of faith, 'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Matthew 6:10). These are 'the peacemakers'; these are thoroughly of one mind, fully harmonious, and are to be called sons 'of God and joint-heirs with Christ' (Romans 8:17). Their work shall be the record of the love of God and the love of our neighbor, in order that we shall suffer no calamities, and be in fear of no offense; they rest in God's most perfect peace.

Cyprian of Carthage stated⁷² that deserters and apostates cannot have the power or the honor of a bishop since they have refused to maintain the unity of the Church and the bond of peace. Even if they are slain for His Name, they cannot be admitted to the peace of the Church.

Cyprian also noted⁷³ that the bond of peace is a result of the love of the brethren for each other. Without love, the bond of peace can't endure.

"Love is the bond of brotherhood, the foundation of peace, it holds and secures unity, and is greater than both hope and faith. It excels both good works and martyrdom, and will continue with us always, eternal with God in the kingdom of heaven. Take away from it patience, and it does not endure. Take away from it the substance of bearing with one another and enduring, and it continues with no roots or strength. Paul, when he spoke of love, joined to it endurance and patience. 'Love', he says, 'suffers long *and* is kind; love doesn't envy, is not puffed up, is not provoked, thinks no evil; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things' (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). He shows that love can tenaciously persevere, because it knows how to endure all things. And in another place: 'Bearing with one another', he says, 'in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:2-3). He proved that neither unity nor peace could be kept unless brethren should cherish one another with mutual toleration, and should keep the bond of concord by the intervention of patience."

Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, wrote⁷⁴ to Cyriacus, Patriarch of Constantinople, in 595 AD at his elevation to Patriarch about the offensive title of Ecumenical Bishop that Cyriacus had assumed for himself. Gregory compared this title to the sin of pride⁷⁵ that was disturbing the bond of peace in the Church. Gregory's views are quite different from the modern Popes of Rome who refer to themselves as the Vicar of Christ.

"When you have wisely professed a right faith, doubtless you should more warily keep the peace of hearts, because of what the Truth says, 'Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another' (Mark 9:50). Paul admonishes, 'Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3). Again he says, 'Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one

⁷² Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle to Antonianus, LI, 24, 29.

⁷³ Cyprian of Carthage, Treatises, IX, 15.

⁷⁴ Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, Epistle to Cyriacus, Bishop of Constantinople, IV, 4.

⁷⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriarch_Cyriacus_of_Constantinople

will see the Lord' (Hebrews 12:14). This peace you will truly have with us, if you turn away from the pride of a profane name, according to what Paul says, 'O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge' (1 Timothy 6:20). It is too bad, if these who have been made preachers of humility should glory in the elation of a vain name, when the true preacher says, 'But God forbid that I should glory, except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Galatians 6:14). He then is truly glorious who glories not in temporal power, but, for the Name of Christ, glories in His passion. Therefore we embrace you from the bottom of our heart; we recognize you as priests, if, rejecting the vanity of words, you occupy the place of holiness with holy humility. We have been scandalized by this impious appellation, and retain in our mind and express in words major complaints. But your Fraternity knows how the Truth says, 'If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift' (Matthew 5:23-24). Consider this: while every fault is done away by the offering of sacrifice, the evil of offense created in another's heart is so great that from one, who has so sinned, the Lord does not accept the sacrifice itself, which tends to do away with sin. Pay attention then speedily to wipe away the cause of offense from your heart, that Almighty God may be able to regard as acceptable the sacrifice of your offering."

Gregory the Great also stated⁷⁶ that Christ established the Church in the world to be one flock under Himself, the one Shepherd, in the bond of peace. To have peace, there must be two sides; we can have peace with God, but we may not be able to achieve peace with some men. The Church is like the Ark of Noah; some people choose to be outside the peace of God.

"We are not far from you, since in Him who is everywhere we are one. Let us then give thanks to Him who, having abolished enmity, has caused that in His flesh there should be in the whole world one flock, and one sheepfold under Himself the one shepherd. Let us be ever mindful how the preacher of truth admonishes us, saying, 'Be careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3), and, 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see God' (Hebrews 12:14). He says also to other disciples, 'If it is possible, as much as lies in you, having peace with all men' (Romans 12:18). For he sees that the good cannot have peace with the bad; and therefore, as you know, he stated, 'If it is possible'".

"Because peace cannot be established except on two sides, when the bad fly from it, the good ought to keep it in their inner hearts. It is admirably said, 'As much as depends on you' (Romans 12:18); meaning that it should remain in us even when it is repelled from the hearts of evil men. Such peace we truly keep, when we treat the faults of the proud at once with love and with persistent justice, when we love them but hate their vices. For man is the work of God; but vice is the work of man. Let us distinguish between what God has made and what man has made, and neither hate the man on account of his error nor love the error on account of the man."

"Let us then with united mind attack the evil of pride in the man that from his enemy, that is to say his error, the man himself may be freed. Our Almighty

⁷⁶ Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, Epistle to Eulogius, Bishop of Alexandris, and Anastasius, Bishop of Antioch, V, 43.

Redeemer will supply strength to love and justice; He will supply to us, though placed far from each other, the unity of His Spirit. He, whose workmanship is the Church, having been constructed like the ark with the four sides of the world, and bound together with the structure of incorruptible planks and the pitch of love, is disturbed by no opposing winds or swells coming from outside.”

Gregory the Great further stated⁷⁷ that since the fruit of the Spirit is peace, those who don't seek peace don't have the fruit of the Spirit and miss the one hope of our calling. By being proud of some gifts of the Spirit, such as knowledge or abstinence, we can lose the greater gift of harmony. True wisdom is pure and peaceful.

“Those that are in disagreement are to be admonished to know most certainly that, in whatever virtues they have in abundance, they can by no means become spiritual if they neglect becoming united to their neighbors by agreement. It is written, ‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace’ (Galatians 5:22). He that doesn't care about keeping peace refuses to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Paul says, ‘There is among you envying and strife; are you not carnal?’ (1 Corinthians 3:3) Again he says, ‘Pursue peace with all people and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord’ (Hebrews 12:14). Again he admonishes, ‘Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; there is one body and one Spirit, just as you are called in one hope of your calling’ (Ephesians 4:3-4). The one hope of our calling, therefore, is never reached, if we don't run to it with a mind at one with our neighbors.”

“It is often the case that some, by being proud of some gifts that they especially partake of, lose the greater gift of harmony. This is like someone, who subdues the flesh more than others by bridling his appetite, but scorns being in harmony with those whom he surpasses in abstinence. Whoever separates abstinence from harmony let him consider the admonition of the Psalmist, ‘Praise him with timbrel and dance’ (Psalm 150:4). In the timbrel a dry, beaten skin resounds, but in the chorus harmonious voices are present. Whoever humbles his body, but forsakes harmony, praises God indeed with timbrel, but doesn't praise Him with dance. When superior knowledge lifts up some, it detaches them from the society of other men; the wiser they are, the less wise they are as to the virtue of harmony. Let these hear what the Truth in person says, ‘Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another’ (Mark 9:50). Salt without peace is not a gift of virtue, but an argument for condemnation. To such it is rightly said, ‘If you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom doesn't descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual and demonic. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceful’ (James 3:14-17). It is pure because its ideas are chaste; it is also peaceful, because it in no wise through elation detaches itself from the society of neighbors. Those who are in disagreement are to be admonished to take note that they offer to God no sacrifice of good work so long as they do not love their neighbors. ‘If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift’ (Matthew 5:23-24). By this precept we are led to consider how intolerable the guilt of men is shown to be when their sacrifice is rejected. Whereas all evils are washed away when followed by what is good, let us consider how great must be

⁷⁷ Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, Book of Pastoral Rule, III, 22, Admonition 23.

the evils of discord, seeing that, unless they are utterly extinguished, they allow no good to follow.”

One Body and One Spirit: Introduction

We will look at One Body and One Spirit from the point of view of:

1. One Lord
2. One Faith
3. One Baptism
4. One Church
5. One God and Father of All

In this context, Paul spoke of the Trinity as One Spirit, One Lord and One God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:4-6). Interspersed between these references to the Trinity are the references to one body, one faith and one baptism; the result is that God the Father is above all, through all and in all. The glue that holds all this together is love (Ephesians 4:2). Chrysostom comments⁷⁸,

“The love which Paul requires of us is no common love, but that which cements us together and makes us be joined inseparably to one another; it accomplishes as great and as perfect a union as though it were between limb and limb”.

One of the most intimate moments of this union occurs as the body of Christ (the Church) meets to worship her Lord and Head and partakes of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. This is a great mystery: how the body of Christ partakes of the Body of Christ!

Chrysostom refers⁷⁹ to the Body of Christ as including the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Testament:

“The body of Christ includes the faithful throughout the whole world, both which are, and which have been, and which shall be. Those that lived before the coming of Christ, who pleased God, are ‘one body’ also, because they knew Christ. ‘Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad’ (John 8:56). Again, ‘If you had believed Moses, you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me’ (John 5:46). And the prophets, too, would not have written of One whom they didn’t know. They both knew Him and worshipped Him. Thus they were also ‘one body’”.

In order to establish and promote this union, each one of us was given Grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift to us (Ephesians 4:7). These gifts, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, etc., are for the equipping of the saints for the work of service (literally deaconing) and for the building up of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12, 16). These gifts have their purposes listed in the following verses:

- That we all come to the unity of the Faith and knowledge of the Son of God (Ephesians 4:13).
- That we all come to a Perfect Man (Ephesians 4:13). This is the New Man referred to elsewhere (Ephesians 2:15, 4:24).

⁷⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XI, v. 4.

⁷⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, X, v. 5.

- That we all come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).
- That the truth of this might be preserved in spite of deceitful attempts to undo it (Ephesians 4:14).
- That the whole body might grow up in love with every part of the body doing its share, being joined and knit together with every joint supplying (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Many times we see today discussions and “manifestations” of spiritual gifts resulting in divisions rather than leading to the unity of the faith, the perfect man and the stature of the fullness of Christ. Perhaps this is caused by a lack of emphasis on love (1 Corinthians 13); but another cause may be lack of humility. Not all are given the same gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28-30); and some are given more or greater gifts than others, just as in the Parable of the Talents where some were given one, two and five talents (Matthew 25:15). Paul also wrote of a ranking (i.e. in honor) of the gifts with apostles first (1 Corinthians 12:28). We need to accept our gift, whatever it is, with humility and strive to use our gift to the best of our ability. Those using their gifts are often given more (Matthew 25:28-29). For more details, see the Gospel lesson for the 16th Sunday after Pentecost.

Thus, the aim of the illustrations of the vine and the branches and the husband and wife is to give us a glimpse into some of the mysteries of God being worked out in our midst (Ephesians 1:9-10, 3:1-10). The focus is always on Union with Christ and unity within the Body of Christ. While this much has been revealed to us, there are depths to it that we will not know until the Lord returns.

One Lord

The word translated “Lord” is the Hebrew *Jehovah* and the Greek *Kurios*. For several centuries before Christ, the Hebrews regarded the Name Jehovah as so holy that they could not dare to even pronounce it. So they substituted for the Name for God *Adonai*, meaning Lord or master. The Greek *Kurios* also conveys the connotation of Lord or master.

Cyril of Jerusalem spoke of “one Lord” as a continuum of the Old and New Testament. The three persons of the Trinity have different roles, but they all work together in perfect harmony.

“There is One God⁸⁰, the Father, Lord of the Old and of the New Testament; and One Lord, Jesus Christ, who was prophesied of in the Old Testament, and came in the New; and One Holy Spirit, who through the Prophets preached of Christ, and when Christ had come, descended and revealed Him.” Each person of the Trinity can be referred to as “one Lord”.

“The Father through the Son, with the Holy Spirit, is the giver⁸¹ of all grace; the gifts of the Father are none other than those of the Son, and those of the Holy Spirit; for there is one Salvation, one Power, one Faith; One God, the Father; One Lord, His only-begotten Son; One Holy Spirit, the Comforter.”

⁸⁰ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XVI, 3.

⁸¹ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XVI, 24.

Gregory Thaumaturgus spoke⁸² of the properties of the Father and the Son, where Lordship can't be separated from Divinity. Both are Lord; both are Divine. The difficulties in getting our mind around this disappear if we think of the Father as the First Cause and the Son as Begotten.

“Divinity is the property of the Father; and whenever the divinity of the Trinity is spoken of as one, the property of the Father belongs also to the Son and the Spirit. If the divinity may be spoken of as one in three persons, the Trinity and the Unity is established; and the oneness, Which is naturally the Father's, is also acknowledged to be the Son's and the Spirit's. Paul addressed the Father as one with respect to divinity, and spoke of the Son as one with respect to lordship. ‘There is one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live’ (1 Corinthians 8:6). There is one God and one Lord, but we don't speak as if we separated the lordship from the divinity, nor estranging the one from the other, but unifying them in the way warranted by actual fact. We call the Son God with the property of the Father, as being His image and offspring; and we call the Father Lord, addressing Him by the name of the One Lord, as being His Origin and Begetter.”

“Just as the designation Father is the expression of originality and generation, so the designation Son is the expression of the image and offspring of the Father. If one were to ask how there is but One God, if there is also a God of God, we would reply that this term applies to the idea of original causation, so far as the Father is the one First Cause. If one were to phrase the question, how there is but One Lord, if the Father also is Lord, we might answer that again by saying that He is so in so far as He is the Father of the Lord; and this difficulty disappears.”

Gregory of Nyssa stated⁸³ that the language used in the Scripture about the word “men” is less precise than the language about the word “God” because there is only one human nature. “God” only appears in the singular referring to Deity; therefore it states that the Lord is One Lord. If this were not the case, the Scripture would refer to “Gods” in referring to the Trinity.

“Golden coins are many sizes, but the gold is one; so those who we see in the nature of man, as Peter, James, and John, are many, yet the man in them is one. Although Scripture uses the word in the plural, where it says ‘men swear by the greater’ (Hebrews 6:16), and ‘sons of men’, etc., we must recognize that this is the custom of the prevailing form of speech.”

“It would be a lengthy task to set out in detail from the Scriptures those constructions which are inexactly expressed; however, where there is a risk of injury to any part of the truth, the Scriptural phrases are much more exact. Scripture admits the naming of ‘men’ in the plural, because no one imagines a multitude of humanities or supposes that many human natures are indicated by the use of the plural. But the word ‘God’ it employs studiously in the singular form only, guarding against introducing the idea of different natures in the Divine essence by the plural ‘Gods’. This is why it says, ‘the Lord our God is one Lord’ (Deuteronomy 6:4 LXX), and also proclaims the Only-Begotten God by the name of Godhead, without dividing the Unity into a Duality, so as to call the Father and the Son two Gods, although each is proclaimed by the holy writers as God. The

⁸² Gregory Thaumaturgus, “A Sectional Confession of Faith”, 8-9.

⁸³ Gregory of Nyssa, “On Not Three Gods”, On the Holy Spirit.

Father is God; the Son is God; and yet by the same proclamation God is One, because no difference either of nature or of operation is contemplated in the Godhead. If those who have been led astray are correct and the nature of the Holy Trinity is diverse, there would be a plurality of Gods, being divided according to the diversity of essence in the persons. But since the Divine Nature is single and unchanging, and rejects all diversity in essence; it is not referred to as multitude. It is called one nature. So it is called in the singular by all its other names, 'God,' 'Good,' 'Holy,' 'Savior,' 'Just,' 'Judge,' and every other Divine name. Whether one says that the names refer to nature or to operation, we shall not dispute the point. If anyone states that by admitting no difference of nature of the three Persons, it leads to a mixture and confusion of the Persons, we shall make such an answer: While we confess the invariable character of the nature, we admit the difference respecting the Cause, and that which is caused, by which alone we apprehend that one Person is distinguished from another. One is the Cause, and another is of the Cause."

The Trisagion

The Trisagion is a very ancient prayer⁸⁴, possibly even from the Apostolic era, that became used widely in the 5th century and is used today by both East and West in different forms. It states, "Holy God, Holy Mighty (or Strong), Holy Immortal One; have mercy on us". The Trisagion is directed to the Trinity as One Lord and God.

John of Damascus, in defending the original version of the Trisagion against what he considered blasphemous insertions, stated⁸⁵ that it refers to the Trinity as One Lord and not just to Christ. The foundation of the Trisagion is expressed in the words of Paul, "of Him, through Him and in Him are all things".

"We hold the words 'Holy God' to refer to the Father, without limiting the title of divinity to Him alone, but acknowledging also as God the Son and the Holy Spirit. The words 'Holy and Mighty' we ascribe to the Son, without stripping the Father and the Holy Spirit of might. The words 'Holy and Immortal' we attribute to the Holy Spirit, without depriving the Father and the Son of immortality. We apply all the divine names simply and unconditionally to each of their subsistence. We follow Gregory the Theologian when he says⁸⁶, 'To us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things, and one Holy Spirit, in Whom are all things'. The words 'of Whom', 'through Whom' and 'in Whom' do not divide the natures, for neither the prepositions nor the order of the names could ever be changed, but they characterize the properties of one unconfused nature. This becomes clear from the fact that they are once more gathered into one, if only one reads with care these words of Paul, 'Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things'" (Romans 11:36).

Gregory the Theologian stated⁸⁷ that the Personalities of the Trinity are unchangeable, but they are still one in nature. To separate them and say that they are not one nature is like saying that Adam and Seth are of different natures since Adam was created while Seth was born.

⁸⁴ See Revelation 4:8, Isaiah 6:3.

⁸⁵ John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, III, 10.

⁸⁶ Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration on the Holy Lights*, XXXIX, 12.

⁸⁷ Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration on the Holy Lights*, XXXIX, 12.

“To us there is but One God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and One Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things; and One Holy Spirit, in Whom are all things (2 Corinthians 8:6). Yet these words, of, by, in, whom, do not denote a difference of nature. If this were the case, the three prepositions, or the order of the three names would never be altered; they characterize the personalities of a nature that is one, ‘Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things; to Him be glory forever, Amen’ (Romans 11:36). The Father is Father, and is not originate, for He is of no one; the Son is Son, and is originate, for He is of the Father. But if you take the word origin in a temporal sense, He too is not originate, for He is the Maker of time, and is not subject to time. The Holy Spirit is truly Spirit, coming forth from the Father, but not after the manner of the Son, for it is not by Generation but by Procession. The Father remained not begotten after His begetting the Son and the Spirit didn’t change into Father or Son because He proceeds, or because He is God. For Personality is unchangeable; how could Personality remain, if it were changeable, and could be removed from one and given to another? Those who make “not begotten” and “Begotten” natures of ambiguous gods would perhaps make Adam and Seth differ in nature, since Adam was not born of flesh (he was created), but Seth was born of Adam and Eve. There is then One God in Three, and These Three are One.”

The Nicene Creed

Cyril of Jerusalem noted that the Nicene Creed was drafted to deal specifically with Jesus as being One Lord. The Creed starts with the Father as the Fountainhead, and then proceeds to the Son. It says “One Lord Jesus Christ” in order to clarify His Nature as Only-Begotten Son of God, having a natural and eternal Lordship. He is called Son as being naturally Begotten. He has many other names that define His action among us.

“The name of the Father⁸⁸, with the very utterance of the title, suggests the thought of the Son, as in like manner one who names the Son thinks immediately of the Father. If He is a Father, He is certainly the Father of a Son; and if a Son, He is certainly the Son of a Father. The Creed thus speaks, ‘In One God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible’; and we add this also, ‘And in One Lord Jesus Christ’, in order that no one should irreverently suppose that the Only-Begotten is second in rank to heaven and earth. Before naming them we named God the Father that in thinking of the Father we might at the same time think of the Son; for no being whatever comes between the Son and the Father.”

“Don’t be carried away⁸⁹ with the Jews when they craftily say, ‘There is one God alone’ (Deuteronomy 6:4); but with the knowledge that God is One, know that there is also an Only-begotten Son of God. The Psalmist in the person of the Son said, ‘The Lord said to Me, You are My Son’ (Psalm 2:7). Don’t pay attention to what the Jews say, but hear what the Prophets say; the Jews stoned and killed the Prophets, and belittled their words?”

The Creed says, “We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God. We say ‘One Lord Jesus Christ’, that His Son-ship may be ‘Only-begotten’. We say ‘One’, that you may not suppose another; we say ‘One’, that you may not distribute the many names of His action among many sons. He is called a Door (John 10:7, 9); but don’t take the name literally for a thing of wood,

⁸⁸ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, VII, 4.

⁸⁹ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, X, 2-4.

but a spiritual, a living Door, discriminating those who enter in. He is called a Way (John 14:6), not one trampled by feet, but leading to the Father in heaven. He is called a Sheep⁹⁰; not an irrational one, but the one which through its precious blood cleanses the world from its sins, which is led before the shearers, and knows when to be silent. This Sheep again is called a Shepherd, who says, 'I am the Good Shepherd' (John 10:11); He is a Sheep because of His manhood, a Shepherd because of the loving-kindness of His Godhead. He said to the Apostles as rational sheep, 'Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves' (Matthew 10:16). He is called a Lion, not as a devourer of men, but indicating by the title His kingly, steadfast, and confident nature. He is also called a Lion in opposition to our adversary the lion, who roars and devours those who have been deceived (1 Peter 5:8). Christ came, not as having changed the gentleness of His own nature, but as the strong 'Lion of the tribe of Judah' (Revelation 5:5), saving those that believe, but trampling on the adversary. He is called a Stone, not a lifeless stone, cut out by men's hands, but a 'chief cornerstone'⁹¹, on whom whoever believes shall not be put to shame''.

"Jesus is called Christ, not as having been anointed by men's hands, but eternally anointed by the Father to His High-Priesthood, on behalf of men (Hebrews 2:17). He is called Dead, not as having lived among the dead, as everyone in Hades, but as being alone 'free among the dead' (Psalm 88:5 LXX). He is called Son of Man, not as having had His generation from earth, as each of us, but as coming on the clouds to judge both the living and the dead (John 5:27). He is called Lord, not improperly as those who are so called among men, but as having a natural and eternal Lordship. He is called Son, not as advanced by adoption, but as naturally begotten. Many are His titles; lest His multiple Names should make you think of many sons, and because of the errors of the heretics, who say that Christ is one, and Jesus another, and the Door another, and so on, the Faith secures you beforehand, saying well, in one Lord Jesus Christ', for though the titles are many, yet their subject is one."

Christ Has Two Natures, but is Still One Lord

Leo the Great pointed out⁹² that even though Jesus is truly a man and at the same time truly God, He is still One Lord. For some this is hard to fathom how it is possible.

"Some are so ashamed of the Gospel of the Cross of Christ, as to impudently belittle the punishment that He underwent for the world's redemption. They deny the nature of true flesh of the Lord, not understanding how the unchangeable Deity of God's Word could have condescended so far for man's salvation, as by His power not to lose His own properties, and in His mercy to take on ours. In Christ, there is a twofold form but one person, and the Son of God, who is at the same time Son of Man, is one Lord. He accepted the condition of a slave out of loving-kindness, not by necessity. By His power He became humble; by His power He became capable of human feelings; by His power He became mortal. For the destruction of the tyranny of sin and death, His weak nature was capable of punishment, and His strong nature didn't lose any of its glory."

⁹⁰ John 1:29, Isaiah 53:7, Acts 8:32.

⁹¹ Psalm 118:22, Isaiah 28:16, 1 Peter 2:4-6

⁹² Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, Sermons, XLVI, 1.

John of Damascus wrote⁹³ extensively on the teaching of the Church regarding the Incarnation. Christ is perfect God and perfect man, but also wholly God and wholly man. Yet He is one distinct person and one Lord. In His humanity, He is limited to a distinct place and time; in His divinity, He is uncircumscribed at any time. The divine nature penetrated His humanity without participation in the affections of His flesh, just as the sun gives us of its energy, but does not participate in ours.

“Christ was in all things and above all things and also dwelt in the womb of the holy Mother of God, but in it by the energy of the Incarnation. He therefore became flesh and He took on Himself the first-fruits of our compound nature, that is, the flesh animated with the intelligent and rational soul. The dwelling of God the Word was changed into the dwelling of the flesh, and the dwelling of the Word, which was formerly just Divine, became compound, of two perfect natures, divinity and humanity. Bearing the characteristic of the divine Son-ship of God the Word He is distinguished from the Father and the Spirit; bearing the characteristic of the flesh, He differs from the Mother and the rest of mankind in that He is God. In His divine nature He is united to the Father and the Spirit; In His human nature He is united to the Mother and to us. He differs from the Father, the Spirit, the Mother and us in being at the same time God and man. This we know is the most special property of Christ. Therefore we confess Him, even after the Incarnation, the one Son of God, and likewise Son of Man, one Christ, one Lord, the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, one Lord Jesus. We reverence His two generations, one from the Father before time, cause, reason and nature, and one in the end for our sake. He is like us and above us; like us in that He was man born of woman at full term and above us because it was not by seed, but by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Virgin Mary, transcending the laws of childbirth. We proclaim Him not as God only, devoid of our humanity, nor yet as man only, stripping Him of His divinity, nor as two distinct persons, but as one and the same, wholly God and wholly man, the same being wholly God, even though He was also flesh and wholly man, even though He was also most High God. By ‘perfect God’ and ‘perfect man’ we mean to emphasize their fullness and unfailing natures; while by ‘wholly God’ and ‘wholly man’ we mean to lay stress on singularity and individuality.”

“We confess also that there is one incarnate nature of God the Word, expressing by the word ‘incarnate’ the essence of the flesh. The Word was made flesh and yet did not abandon His own proper immateriality. He became wholly flesh and yet remained wholly uncircumscribed. So far as He is body He is diminished and contracted into narrow limits; but inasmuch as He is God, He is uncircumscribed, His flesh not having the same limits as His uncircumscribed divinity.”

“He is then wholly perfect God, but yet is not simply God; for He is not only God but also man. He is also wholly perfect man but not simply man, for He is not only man but also God. ‘Simply’ here has reference to His nature. But observe that although we hold that the natures of the Lord permeate one another, yet we know that the permeation springs from the divine nature. The divine nature penetrates and permeates all things, as it wills, while nothing penetrates it; it, too, imparts to the flesh its own peculiar glories, while abiding itself without participation in the affections of the flesh. If the sun imparts to us its energies and

⁹³ John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, III, 10.

yet does not participate in ours, how much the rather must this be true of the Creator and Lord of the Sun.”

Hilary of Poitiers used⁹⁴ details from the Mosaic Law to show that Christ and the Father are both one Lord and one God. The Scribes, in not understanding this, really didn't understand the Law, of which they were supposed to be experts.

“As Jesus taught in the Temple, He asked how the Scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? David himself said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My Right Hand, till I make Your enemies the footstool of Your feet’ (Psalm 110:1). David himself calls Him Lord, and how is He his Son? The Scribe is not far from the Kingdom of God (Mark 12:34) when he confesses one God, Who is to be loved above all things. But his own statement of the Law reveals that the mystery of the Law has escaped him. He does not know Christ the Lord, the Son of God, that the nature of His birth is included in the confession of the one God. So Jesus asked the Scribe: how he can call Christ the Son of David, when David calls Him his Lord? It is against the order of nature that the son of so great a Patriarch should be also his Lord. He asked the Scribe, who regards Him only with respect to His flesh, and His birth from Mary, the daughter of David, to remember that, with respect to His Spirit, He is David's Lord rather than his son. The words, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord’ (Deuteronomy 6:4), do not sever Christ from the mystery of the One Lord, since so great a Patriarch and Prophet calls Him his Lord, as the Son begotten of the Lord before the morning star. David does not pass over the Law, or forget that none other is to be confessed Lord. Without violating the faith of the Law, David teaches that Christ is Lord, in that He had His being by the mystery of a natural birth from the substance of the incorporeal God. He is one, born of one, and the nature of the one Lord has made Him by nature Lord.”

“What room is left for doubt any longer? The Lord Himself, proclaiming that the chief commandment of the Law is to confess and love the one Lord, proves Himself to be Lord not by words of His own, but by the Prophet's testimony, always signifying that He is Lord, because He is the Son of God. Thus by the Law Christ teaches that there is one Lord; by the witness of the prophets He proves Himself Lord also.”

Scripture Speaks of Father, Son and Holy Spirit All As God

There are a number of accounts in the Scripture that address Father, Son and Holy Spirit as God. Tertullian commented⁹⁵ on a number of these accounts in the Scripture to show that the Father would have had to come down to earth Himself if only one person was described in these accounts. But that is not the case; multiple persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) are described, yet still one God and one Lord.

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; the scepter of Your kingdom is a scepter of righteousness. You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You’ (Psalm 45:6-7); that is, made You His Christ. Since He speaks to God here, and states that God is anointed by God, He confirms that Two are God, by reason of the scepter's royal power.”

“Isaiah says to the Person of Christ, ‘The Sabeans, men of stature, shall pass over to You; and they shall follow after You, bound in fetters. They shall

⁹⁴ Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, IX, 26-27.

⁹⁵ Tertullian, Against Praxeas, II, vii, 13.

bow before You, because **God is in You**, and there is no God beside You, O Lord. For **You are our God**, yet we didn't know it; You are the God of Israel' (Isaiah 45:14-15 LXX). Here too, by saying, 'God is in You', and 'You are God', he reveals Two who were God. In the first expression 'in You' means in Christ, and in the second 'You are our God' means the Holy Spirit."

"There is a still grander statement in the Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (John 1:1). There was One God 'who was', and there was another God 'with whom' He was."

"A much more ancient testimony we have in Genesis. 'Then the Lord rained on Sodom and on Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven' (Genesis 19:24). Also in Genesis, the Father spoke to the Son, 'Let there be light' as the Holy Spirit moved over the waters (Genesis 1:2-3). In a more veiled reference at the same place, the Father spoke to the Son and the Holy Spirit, 'Let us make man in our image'" (Genesis 1:26-28).

"Now, if there were found in the Scriptures only one Person of Him who is God and Lord, Christ would be justly enough inadmissible to the title of God and Lord. In the Scriptures only One God and One Lord was declared, and the Father Himself would have had to have come down to earth. If that were the case, His entire Economy would be involved in obscurity, which has been planned and arranged with so clear a foresight in His providential dispensation as matter for our faith."

Irenaeus spelled out⁹⁶ the relation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to each other. The Father is above all, through all and in all, but it is the Holy Spirit that is in us all. The Son grants the Holy Spirit to all as the Father wills. The Father is the head of Christ and Christ is the head of the Church. Christ created all things as the Father spoke. Those who receive Christ are given power to become sons of God.

"The Father bears the creation and His own Word simultaneously, and the Word borne by the Father grants the Spirit⁹⁷ to all as the Father wills. To some He gives by creation what is made; to others He gives by adoption, namely generation. Thus one God the Father is declared, who is above all, and through all, and in all. The Father is indeed above all, and He is the Head of Christ; but the Word is through all things, and is Himself the Head of the Church. The Spirit is in us all and He is the living water (John 7:39), which the Lord grants to those who rightly believe in Him, love Him, and who know that 'there is one Father, who is above all, and through all, and in us all' (Ephesians 4:6). John bears witness to these things, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made' (John 1:1-3). Then John said of the Word Himself, 'He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the sons of God, to those who believe in His Name' (John 1:10-12). Showing His human nature, John said, 'The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us'. Continuing he said, 'We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten

⁹⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, xviii, 2-3.

⁹⁷ Some have argued that Irenaeus is saying here that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, as the Western Churches have added to the Nicene Creed. But there is nothing here about procession, only about the mission of the Holy Spirit.

by the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). He thus plainly points out to those willing to hear, to those having ears, that there is one God, the Father over all, and one Word of God, who is through all, by whom all things have been made. This world belongs to Him, and was made by Him, according to the Father's will, and not by angels; nor by apostasy, defect, and ignorance."

"The Creator of the world is truly the Word of God; this is our Lord, who in the last times was made man, and who in an invisible manner contains all things created, and is inherent in the entire creation, since the Word of God governs and arranges all things. Therefore He came to His own in a visible manner, was made flesh, and hung on the tree, that He might sum up all things in Himself. 'His own peculiar people did not receive Him'. Moses declared this among the people, 'Your life shall hang before your eyes, and you will not believe in your Life' (Deuteronomy 28:66 OSB LXX). Those who did not receive Him did not receive life. 'But to as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God'. It is He who has power from the Father over all things, since He is the Word of God. He is really man, communicating with invisible beings after the manner of the intellect, and appointing a law observable to the outward senses. He reigns clearly over things visible and pertaining to men; He brings in just judgment and worthy upon all. David clearly points to this, 'Our God shall openly come, and will not keep silence' (Psalm 50:3 LXX). David shows the judgment which He brings, saying, 'A fire shall burn in His sight, and a strong tempest shall rage round about Him. He shall summon the heaven above, and the earth, that he may judge his people'" (Psalm 50:3-4 LXX).

Ambrose of Milan stated⁹⁸ that the Holy Spirit fills and possesses all things just like the Father and the Son. No blessing can be full except through the Holy Spirit, and there is no difference in will between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

"In the Gospel an Angel went down at a certain time into the pool of Siloam and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well (John 5:4). The Angel declared in this type about the descent of the Holy Spirit, which was to come to pass in our day, and should consecrate the waters when invoked by the prayers of the priest. That Angel, then, was a herald of the Holy Spirit; by means of the grace of the Spirit, medicine was to be applied to our infirmities of soul and mind. The Spirit, then, has the same ministry as God the Father and Christ. He fills all things, possesses all things, works all and in all in the same manner as God the Father and the Son work."

"What, then, is more divine than the working of the Holy Spirit, since God Himself testifies that the Holy Spirit presides over His blessings, saying, 'I will put My Spirit upon your seed and My blessings upon your children' (Isaiah 44:3 LXX). No blessing can be full except through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Paul found nothing better to wish us than this, 'We do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord' (Colossians 1:9-10). He taught that this was the will of God; by walking in good works, words and affections, we should be filled with the will of God, Who puts His Holy Spirit in our hearts. Therefore if he who has the Holy Spirit is filled with the

⁹⁸ Ambrose of Milan, On the Holy Spirit, I, vii, 88-89.

will of God, there is certainly no difference of will between the Father and the Son.”

Athanasius of Alexandria described⁹⁹ the Oneness of the relationship of the Father and the Son in terms of the sun and its radiance. The sun and its radiance are two identifiable things, but the sun is the source just as the Father is the fountainhead. Yet the sun and its radiance are one and come from one nature. Similarly using another example, one can see the Son in the Father and vice versa from looking at the Emperor and a statue or image of the Emperor; if one sees the image, one sees the Emperor, and vice versa, where in our case, the Son is the Image of the Father.

“Jesus had said, ‘I and the Father are One’ (John 10:30) and added, ‘I in the Father and the Father in Me’ (John 14:10), to show the identity of the Godhead and the unity of Its Essence. They are one, but not as one thing divided into two parts; they are not as one thing named twice, so that the Son becomes at one time Father, at another time His own Son; for this Sabellius was judged a heretic. They are two, because the Father is Father and is not also Son, and the Son is Son and not also Father; but the nature is one; for the offspring is not unlike its parent, for it is his image. All that is the Father’s, is the Son’s. The Son is not another God; for He was not procured from outside the Trinity, otherwise there would be many gods. If the Son is another Person, as an Offspring, still He is the same as God; He and the Father are one in peculiarity of nature, and in the identity of the one Godhead. The radiance of the sun is also light, not second to the sun, not a different light, not from participation in it, but a whole and proper offspring of it. Such an offspring is necessarily one light; and no one would say that they are two lights; but the sun and its radiance are two; yet one is the light from the sun enlightening all things in its radiance. So also the Godhead of the Son is the Father’s; therefore it is also indivisible; thus there is one God and none other than He. Since they are one, and the Godhead itself one, the same things are said of the Son, which are said of the Father. For instance, He is God: ‘And the Word was God’ (John 1:1); He is Almighty: ‘I am He who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty’ (Revelation 1:8); He is Lord: ‘One Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Corinthians 8:6); He is Light: ‘I am the Light’ (John 8:12); He wipes out sins: ‘that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins’ (Luke 5:24); and so with other attributes. The Son Himself says, ‘All things that the Father has are Mine’ (John 16:15); and again, ‘And all Mine are Yours’” (John 17:10).

“On hearing the attributes of the Father spoken of a Son, we shall see the Father in the Son; and we shall contemplate the Son in the Father, when what is said of the Son is said of the Father also. The attributes of the Father are ascribed to the Son, because the Son is an Offspring from Him. The Son’s attributes are proper to the Father, because the Son is the proper Offspring of His Essence. He who in this sense understands that the Son and the Father are one, knows that He is in the Father and the Father in the Son. Whoever enters into this is convinced that ‘He that has seen Me has seen the Father’ (John 14:9), for in the Son is contemplated the Father’s Godhead.”

“We may perceive this from the illustration of the Emperor’s image. In the image is the shape and form of the Emperor, and in the Emperor is that shape which is in the image. The likeness of the Emperor in the image is exact; so that a

⁹⁹ Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses Against the Arians, III, xxiii, 4-5.

person who looks at the image, sees in it the Emperor; and he who sees the Emperor, recognizes that it is he who is in the image. The likeness does not differ; to one who saw the image and wished to see the Emperor, the image might say, 'I and the Emperor are one. I am in him, and he is in me; what you see in me, that you behold in him, and what you have seen in him, that you behold in me.' He who worships the image, in it worships the Emperor also; for the image is his appearance. Since the Son is the Father's Image, it must be understood that the Godhead and propriety of the Father is the Being of the Son."

One Faith

Many people pay lip service to the concept of "One Faith", but they don't have the depth of understanding to address the subject in more than a superficial way. There are many implications of "One Faith", and we will cover a few of them.

Irenaeus of Lyons stated¹⁰⁰ that there was a great oneness of the Faith during his life in the mid 2nd century. Everyone handed down the Faith as he received it, whether he was a great speaker or a brilliant intellectual.

"The Church, having received the Preaching and the Faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points of doctrine just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. Although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the impact of the tradition is one and the same. The Churches which have been planted in Germany do not believe or hand down anything different, nor do those in Spain, Gaul, Egypt, Libya, those in the East or those which have been established in the central regions of the world. But as the sun, that creature of God is one and the same throughout the whole world, so also the preaching of the truth shines everywhere, and enlightens all men that are willing to come to knowledge of the truth. None of the rulers in the Churches, however highly gifted he may be in point of eloquence, teach doctrines different from these; nor, on the other hand, will he who is deficient in power of expression inflict injury on the tradition. The Faith being ever one and the same, no one, who is able at great length to discourse regarding it, makes any addition to it, nor does one, who can say but little diminish it."

Leo the Great encouraged¹⁰¹ his people to stick to the one Faith as defined by the catholic and Apostolic creed. There are many people out there promoting wicked fables, trying to shoot down on a moonless night the upright of heart.

"You are 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people' (1 Peter 2:9), built on the impregnable rock, Christ, and joined to the Lord by His true assumption of our flesh. Remain firm in that Faith, which you have professed before many witnesses, and in which you were reborn through water and the Holy Spirit, and received the anointing of salvation, and the seal of eternal life. But 'if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be anathema' (Galatians 1:9). Refuse to put wicked fables

¹⁰⁰ Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, I, x, 2.

¹⁰¹ Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, Sermon on the Feast of the Nativity, XXIV, 6.

before the clearest truth, and what you may happen to read or hear contrary to the rule of the catholic and Apostolic creed, judge it altogether deadly and diabolical. Don't be carried away by their deceitful keepings of sham and pretended fasts which tend not to cleanse, but to destroy men's souls. They put on a cloak of piety and chastity, but under this deceit they conceal the filthiness of their acts. From the recesses of their ungodly heart, they hurl shafts to wound the simple; as the prophet says, 'that in a moonless night they may shoot down the upright in heart' (Psalm 11:2 OSB LXX). A mighty defense is a sound faith, to which nothing has to be added or taken away. Unless the Faith is one, it is no faith, as Paul says, 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all' (Ephesians 4:5-6). Cling to this unity, dearly beloved, with unshaken minds, and in it follow after all holiness (Hebrews 12:14). In it carry out the Lord's commands, because 'without faith it is impossible to please God' (Hebrews 11:6); without it nothing is holy, nothing is pure, nothing is alive. 'The righteous shall live by My faith' (Habakkuk 2:4 OSB LXX); he who by the devil's deception loses it, is dead though living; as righteousness is gained by faith, so too by a true faith is eternal life gained. This is life eternal, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent. May He make you advance and persevere to the end!"

One Faith by Nature, Not by Will

Hilary of Poitiers countered¹⁰² the opinion of heretics of his day, who said that the oneness in Christ, one Lord, one Faith, one baptism, etc. is due to harmony of will and not due to nature. The heretics twisted the Scripture to support their position. Hilary emphasized that the oneness is through faith, and the heretics agreed that those, whose heart and soul were one, achieved this oneness through faith. If it is through faith, Hilary argued, the oneness has its basis in the Nature of God and not in harmony of will.

"The heretics deny things that are clearly stated and understood; they pervert them by the most foolish lies so as afterwards to deny them. The words of Christ, 'I and My Father are one' (John 10:30), they try to refer to a mere concord of unanimity, so that there may be in them a unity of will not of nature; that is, that they may be one not by essence of being, but by identity of will. They apply to the support of their case, 'Now of the multitude of them that believed were one heart and soul' (Acts 4:32), in order to prove that a diversity of souls and hearts may be united into one heart and soul through a mere conformity of will. They also cite the words, 'Now he that plants and he that waters are one' (1 Corinthians 3:8), to show that, since They are one in Their work for our salvation, and in the revelation of one mystery, Their unity is a unity of wills. Again, they quote the prayer of our Lord for the salvation of the Gentiles who should believe in Him, 'I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us' (John 17:20-21). The heretics try to show that, since men cannot be fused back into God or coalesce into one undistinguished mass, this oneness must arise from unity of will, while all perform actions pleasing to God. They claim that we unite one with another in the harmonious accord of our thoughts, and that thus it is not nature which makes us one, but will."

"All agree that those whose soul and heart were one were one through faith in God. I ask, is the faith one or is there a second faith? It is one on the

¹⁰² Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, VIII, 5, 7-9.

authority of Paul himself, who proclaims one faith even as one Lord, one baptism, one hope, and one God (Ephesians 4:4-5). If then it is through faith, that is, through the nature of one faith, that all are one, how is it that heretics do not understand a natural unity in the case of those who through the nature of one faith are one? All were born again to innocence, to immortality, to the knowledge of God, to the faith of hope. These things cannot differ within themselves because there is both one hope and one God, as also there is one Lord and one baptism of regeneration. These things are one not by agreement but by nature. They have been begotten again into the nature of one life and eternity, inasmuch as their soul and heart are one; the unity of will fails to account for their case who are one by regeneration into the same nature.”

“These are not our own conjectures which we offer, nor do we falsely put together any of these things in order to deceive the ears of our hearers by perverting the meaning of words. We hold fast the form of sound teaching; we know and preach the things which are true. Paul shows that this unity of the faithful arises from the nature of the sacraments, ‘As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (Galatians 3:27-28). That these are one amid so great diversities of race, condition, sex, is it from an agreement of will or from the unity of the sacrament, since these have one baptism and have all put on one Christ? How will a concord of minds help here when they are one in that they have put on one Christ through the nature of one baptism?”

“Again, since he who plants and he who waters are one, are they not one because they are born again in one baptism and they form a ministry of one regenerating baptism? Do they not do the same thing? Are they not one in One? So they who are one through the same thing are one also by nature, not only by will, inasmuch as they themselves have been made the same thing and are ministers of the same thing and the same power.”

One Faith by Obedience to the Bishop

Ignatius of Antioch linked¹⁰³ the one Faith with obedience to the Bishop and with the Eucharist, which is the medicine of immortality.

“Stand fast, brethren, in the faith of Jesus Christ, in His love, in His passion, and in His resurrection. Come together all of you in common, and individually, through grace, in one faith of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ His only-begotten Son, and ‘the first-born over all creation’ (Colossians 1:15), but of the seed of David according to the flesh. Be under the guidance of the Comforter, in obedience to the bishop and the presbytery with an undivided mind. Break one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote which prevents us from dying, but a cleansing remedy driving away evil, which causes that we should live in God through Jesus Christ.”

Many Orthodox Jurisdictions today are returning to the words of Ignatius in deciding whether to baptize converts coming from various Protestant denominations. It used to be that the baptism of Protestants in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was recognized as valid by most Orthodox Jurisdictions, and the converts came into the Church by just Chrismation. But in recent years many Protestant denominations are fracturing into disregard for the Trinity as if it’s

¹⁰³ Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Ephesians, 20.

unimportant. Each individual may be coming from a very different background since there can be a wide spectrum of belief within the same Protestant denomination. A common remedy for this problem is for individuals to enter the Orthodox Church in obedience to the Bishop, and the Bishop will decide in each case what is right and proper for their special case.

One Baptism

One baptism is a very elusive subject, and different people have different concepts as to what Baptism is. Adding to the confusion are different kinds of Baptism, such as the Baptism of John the Baptist versus the Baptism of the Church. Then there are those who think that water-baptism is of lesser importance than the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. All this adds up to a great challenge to the attainment of one Baptism.

A Different Understanding of Baptism East Versus West

There is a different understanding of baptism between East and West today¹⁰⁴. In the Orthodox Church, baptism is generally viewed as something that is done in the Church and by the Church. It is a public event, not a private event. Both East and West would probably agree that there are two deaths in baptism: our death with Christ on the Cross, and our daily dying to sin as we walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). In the Orthodox Church, baptism is followed immediately with Chrismation, that is, the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, which is true food, and without which we have no life (John 6:53-57). Baptism and Chrismation lead us into that life, and the Eucharist is the continuation and fulfillment of that life.

In the West, baptism is viewed¹⁰⁵ as a private event. One result is the tragic consequence of baptism's absence from liturgy, piety, Christian worldview, and philosophy of life. The West, having largely abandoned full immersion, has lost sight of the fact that baptism is a burial and resurrection with Christ. Having lost this, the West has had to develop¹⁰⁶ alternative theology for the meaning of baptism. The fundamental rule of liturgical theology is that the true meaning of each liturgical act is revealed through context; each rite receives its meaning and also its power from that which precedes it and that which follows¹⁰⁷. Therefore, changing one part of the sacrament can have profound effects on the rest of the sacrament. The Orthodox Church, by preserving the form of the sacrament of baptism, has also preserved the theology of the sacrament.

We can see the development of this difference between East and West in the controversy between Cyprian of Carthage and Pope Stephen I in the mid 3rd century. The matter in dispute was the effect of baptism, when it was administered by heretics. Stephen declared¹⁰⁸ baptism by heretics valid if administered according to the institution either in the name of Christ or of the

¹⁰⁴ See Mark Douglas Saunders, Holy Baptism, An Orthodox Christian Understanding, at the web site: <http://www.westernorthodox.com/baptism.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Alexander Schmemmann, Of Water and the Spirit, pp. 8-101.

¹⁰⁶ Alexander Schmemmann, Of Water and the Spirit, p. 10.

¹⁰⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, Of Water and the Spirit, p. 74.

¹⁰⁸ The modern Catholic Church holds dogmatically that baptism by heretics and even by atheists or other non-Christians is valid if done according to the manner that the Church prescribes, in other words by using the Trinitarian formula "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", while having the intention to baptize, even if the person doing the baptizing is not themselves baptized. [See Catechism of the Catholic Church no.1256, Code of Canon Law, can. 861 no.2.] The doctrinal basis for this was articulated by St. Augustine in his conflict with the Donatists. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyprian>.

Holy Trinity. Cyprian, on the other hand, believing that outside the Church there was no true baptism, regarded that of heretics as null and void, and baptized as for the first time those who joined the Church from heretics. When heretics had been baptized in the Church, but had temporarily fallen away and wished to return in penitence, then Cyprian did not re-baptize them.

Following are some excerpts from Cyprian and his fellow Bishops¹⁰⁹ in their understanding that the baptism of heretics is done outside the Church and therefore is not baptism at all. Each paragraph in the following is the viewpoint of a different Bishop.

“According to Apostolic testimony, heretics, who are called adversaries of Christ and Antichrists, when they come to the Church, must be baptized with the one baptism of the Church, that they may be made friends and Christians.”

“There is no baptism except the one and true baptism in the Church. Not only is God one, but the faith is one, and the Church is one, wherein stands the one baptism, and holiness. Whatever is done outside has no effect on salvation.”

“Let those who favor heretics, consider how many baptisms there are. We claim for the Church one baptism, which we only know in the Church. How can they baptize anyone in the name of Christ, whom Christ Himself declares to be His adversaries?”

“Since all confess that there is one baptism, I am surprised that all do not perceive the unity of the same baptism. For the Church and heresy are two different things. If heretics have baptism, we don’t have it; but if we have it, heretics cannot have it. But there is no doubt that the Church alone possesses the baptism of Christ, since she alone possesses both the grace and the truth of Christ.”

“We maintain one baptism, because we demand for the Church Catholic alone her own property. But those who say that heretics truly and legitimately baptize, are themselves the people who make not one, but many baptisms. Since heresies are many, according to their number, there will be that many different baptisms.”

“I know one Church and her one baptism. If there are any who says that the grace of baptism is with heretics, he must first show and prove that the Church is among them.”

“God is one; Christ is one; the Church is one; and baptism is one. How, therefore, can anyone be baptized there, where God, Christ, and the one Church is not?”

Cyprian compared¹¹⁰ Pope Stephen I to Korah in his rebellion against Moses. Both have separated themselves from the Catholic Church. Thus the Church and heretics do not have one Lord, one faith, one baptism or even one Spirit.

“The greatness of Stephen’s error, and the depth of his blindness, is that he says that remission of sins can be granted in the synagogues of heretics, and does not remain on the foundation of the one Church which was once based by Christ upon the rock. This may be perceived from Christ’s words to Peter, ‘Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven’ (Matthew 16:19). And again, in the Gospel, when Christ breathed on the Apostles alone, saying, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit; if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are

¹⁰⁹ Cyprian of Carthage, The 7th Council of Carthage on the Baptism of Heretics

¹¹⁰ Cyprian, Epistles, LXXIV, 16, 26.

retained' (John 20:22-23). Therefore the power of remitting sins was given to the Apostles, to the Churches which they established, and to the bishops who succeeded them by ordination. Our adversaries and the enemies of the one Catholic Church, where we have succeeded the Apostles, assert for themselves unlawful priesthoods, and set up profane altars. What else are they than Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Numbers 16), profane with a like wickedness, and about to suffer the same punishments, as well as those who agree with them, just as their partners and abettors perished in the wilderness?"

"Those who contend that people baptized among the heretics ought to be received as if they had obtained the grace of lawful baptism, say that baptism is one and the same to them and to us, and differs in no respect. But the Apostle Paul says, 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God (Ephesians 4:5-6). If the baptism of heretics is one and the same with ours, without doubt their faith also is one. But if our faith is one, we also have one Lord; if there is one Lord, it follows that we say that He is one. But if this unity which cannot be separated and divided at all is itself also among heretics, why do we contend any more? Why do we call them heretics and not Christians? Since we and heretics do not have one God, one Lord, one Church, one faith, not even one Spirit, or one body, it is clear that neither can baptism be common to us and heretics, since between us there is nothing at all in common. Yet Stephen is not ashamed to offer patronage to such heretics in opposition to the Church, and for the sake of maintaining heretics to divide the brotherhood. In addition, he calls Cyprian 'a false Christ and a false apostle, and a deceitful worker'. However he is conscious that he is what he accuses others of."

Cyprian also noted that the Scriptures are opposed to Pope Stephen I. One must be in the "garden" of Solomon and the Ark of Noah in order to be baptized in the Church. Those who create broken cisterns that don't hold water do not have the baptism contained in the Church; they can't even sanctify themselves, never mind others.

"For it has been delivered¹¹¹ to us, that there is one God, one Christ, one hope, one faith, one Church, and one baptism ordained only in the one Church, from which unity whoever departs must be found with heretics. While Stephen upholds the heretics against the Church, he impugns the sacrament of the divine tradition. The unity of the sacrament we see expressed in the Song of Solomon, in the person of Christ, 'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a fountain sealed, a well of living water, a garden with the fruit of pomegranates' (Song of Solomon 4:12-13 LXX). But if His Church is a garden enclosed, and a fountain sealed, how can he who is not in the Church enter into the same garden, or drink from its fountain? Moreover, Peter, showing and vindicating the unity, has commanded and warned us that we cannot be saved, except by the one only baptism of one Church. 'In the ark', he says, 'of Noah, a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water, as also baptism in like manner saves you' (1 Peter 3:20-21). In how short and spiritual a summary has he set forth the sacrament of unity! In that baptism of the world, in which its ancient iniquity was purged away, he who was not in the Ark of Noah could not be saved by water. So neither can he appear to be saved by baptism who has not been baptized in the Church, which is established in the unity of the Lord according to the sacrament of the one ark."

¹¹¹ Cyprian, Epistle to Pompey, LXXIII, 11.

“When we were together¹¹² in council, dearest brethren, we read your letter which you wrote to us concerning those who seem to be baptized by a heretic and a schismatic, asking whether, when they come to the Catholic Church, they ought to be baptized. On which matter, although you yourselves hold the truth and the Catholic rule, yet since you have thought that we ought to be consulted, we put forward our opinion, not as a new one, but we join with you in equal agreement, in an opinion long since decreed by our predecessors. We judge and hold it for certain that no one can be baptized outside the Church, since there is one baptism appointed in the holy Church. In the words of the Lord, ‘They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns -- broken cisterns that can hold no water’ (Jeremiah 2:13). And again, ‘Abstain from strange water, and don’t drink from a fountain of strange water’ (Proverbs 9:18 LXX). It is required that the water should first be cleansed and sanctified by the priest, that it may wash away by its baptism the sins of the man who is baptized. The Lord says, ‘Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness; and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart and will put a new spirit within you’ (Ezekiel 36:25-26). But how can he cleanse and sanctify the water when he is himself unclean, and in whom the Holy Spirit does not dwell? The Lord says, ‘Whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean’ (Numbers 19:22). How can he who baptizes give to another remission of sins when he himself, being outside the Church, cannot put away his own sins?”

Not All Baptisms Are the Same

Ambrose of Milan compared¹¹³ different baptisms, noting that they are not all one. The baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch was valid as the Sacrament of baptism because it was done in the Name of Christ (Acts 8:36-39); the baptism of John was not really the Sacrament of baptism and it needed to be repeated since it was done just for repentance (Acts 19:4). Any baptism is complete if done in the Name of the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit, since they are all one.

“The Ethiopian eunuch of Queen Candace, when baptized in Christ, obtained the fullness of the sacrament. Those who said that they didn’t know of any Holy Spirit, although they said that they had been baptized with John’s baptism, were baptized afterwards, because John baptized for the remission of sins in the Name of the coming Jesus, not in his own name. They didn’t know the Spirit, because in the form in which John baptized they had not received baptism in the Name of Christ. John, though he did not baptize in the Spirit, nevertheless preached Christ and the Spirit. When he was questioned whether he were perchance himself the Christ, he answered, ‘I indeed baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire’ (Matthew 3:11). Because they had been baptized neither in the Name of Christ nor with faith in the Holy Spirit, they could not have received the sacrament of baptism.”

“So they were baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ, and baptism was not ‘repeated’ in their case, but was administered differently, for there is but one baptism. Where there is not the complete sacrament of baptism, there is not considered to be a commencement nor any kind of baptism. But baptism is complete if one confesses the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. If you deny

¹¹² Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle to Januarius et al, LXIX, 1.

¹¹³ Ambrose of Milan, Of the Holy Spirit, I, iii, 41-43.

One you overthrow the whole. If you mention in words One only, the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit, and in your belief do not deny either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit, the mystery of the faith is complete. So too, if you name the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and lessen the power of either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit, the whole mystery is made empty. Those who had said, ‘We have not heard if there is any Holy Spirit’ (Acts 19:5), were baptized afterwards in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was an additional abundance of grace, for now through Paul’s preaching they knew the Holy Spirit.”

“Although subsequently mention is not made of the Spirit, He is yet believed in, and what had not been mentioned in words may be expressed in belief. For when it is said, ‘In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ’, the mystery is complete through the oneness of the Name, and the Spirit is not separated from the baptism of Christ, since John baptized into repentance and Christ baptized into the Spirit.”

John of Damascus outlined¹¹⁴ what baptism means for the Orthodox Church. We are only baptized once, but we must be baptized into the Trinity or it is not real Baptism. Baptism is an image of the death of Christ, and the details of the baptismal rite reflect that. But there are two parts to baptism: water and the Spirit, where water expresses death and the Spirit expresses life.

“We confess one baptism for the remission of sins and for life eternal, since baptism declares the Lord’s death. We are indeed ‘buried with the Lord through baptism’ (Colossians 2:12), as Paul said. So then, as our Lord died once for all, we also must be baptized once for all, and baptized according to the Word of the Lord, in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19), being taught the confession in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. After having been baptized into Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and having been taught that there is one Divine Nature in three Persons, if some are re-baptized¹¹⁵, these, as Paul says, crucify Christ afresh. For it is impossible for those, who were once enlightened, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame (Hebrews 6:4-6). But those who were not baptized into the Holy Trinity, these must be baptized again. Although Paul said, ‘Into Christ and into His death were we baptized’ (Romans 6:3), he does not mean that the invocation of baptism must be in these words, but that baptism is an image of the death of Christ. By the three immersions, baptism signifies the three days of our Lord’s entombment. The baptism into Christ means that believers are baptized into Him. We could not believe in Christ if we were not taught confession in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, where Christ is the Son of the Living God (Matthew 16:16), Whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). In the words of David, ‘Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above your companions’ (Psalm 14:7 LXX). Isaiah, also speaking in the person of the Lord, says, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me’ (Isaiah 61:1 LXX). Christ, however, taught His own disciples the invocation and said, ‘Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit’ (Matthew 28:19). Since Christ made us for incorruption, and we transgressed His command, He condemned us to the corruption of death in order that that which is evil should not be immortal. In

¹¹⁴ John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, IV, 9.

¹¹⁵ Many of the heretics re-baptized those Christians that entered their communities.

His compassion He stooped to His servants and became like us to redeem us from corruption through His own passion. He caused the fountain of remission to spring for us out of His holy and immaculate side (John 19:34). Water came out of His side for our regeneration, and the washing away of sin and corruption; blood came out of His side to drink as the pledge of life eternal. He laid on us the command to be born again of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5), through prayer and invocation, the Holy Spirit drawing near to the water. Since man's nature is twofold, consisting of soul and body, He gave us a twofold purification, of water and of the Spirit. The Spirit renews that part in us which is after His image and likeness, and the water by the grace of the Spirit cleanses the body from sin and delivers it from corruption. The water expresses the image of death, but the Spirit expresses the guarantee of life."

Tertullian wrote¹¹⁶ regarding heretics: their excommunication testifies that they are outside the Faith and that they don't have the same God. Therefore they can't have the same baptism, and what they do have doesn't count.

"There is to us one, and only one, baptism; as well according to the Gospel as according to Paul's letters, inasmuch as he says, 'One God, and one baptism, and one church in the heavens' (Ephesians 4:4-6 loosely). But it must be admitted that the question, 'What rules are to be observed with regard to heretics?' is worthy of being treated. Heretics have no fellowship with us; the mere fact of their excommunication testifies that they are outsiders. I am not bound to recognize in them a thing which is commanded to me, because they and we don't have the same God, nor the same Christ. Therefore their baptism is not one with ours either, because it is not the same; they don't have a proper baptism; in fact, they don't have it at all. It is not capable of being counted if they don't have it (Ecclesiastes 1:15). They cannot receive it either. We enter the font once; sins are washed away once, because they ought never to be repeated. The Jewish Israel bathes daily, because he is daily being defiled. Out of fear that defilement might be practiced among us also, therefore the definition regarding the one bathing was made (John 13:10). Happy is the water, which once washes away; which does not mock sinners with vain hopes; which does not defile again those whom it has washed, by being infected with the repetition of impurities!"

One Church

We are living in an age where the concept of "one Church" is a hard thing to fathom. Many divisions exist among the people of God and the number of new denominations keeps increasing. The perspective of the early Church Fathers was quite different; there was a real unity in the Church that was disrupted by heretics who generally denied the Deity of Christ. It was easier for the early Church to achieve unity; they just had to focus back on what the Apostles taught, which was clearer then than now. Our problem today is that there are so many different dissenting voices, all claiming to be speaking for the early Church, that it is hard to know who is right. In addition, modern heretics, who deny the Deity of Christ, are increasing rapidly; like the early heretics, modern heretics also claim to be part of the Church. In this study, we focus on the perspective of what the early Church Fathers had to say on this issue.

¹¹⁶ Tertullian, On Baptism, III, ii, 15.

Ignatius of Antioch stated¹¹⁷ that there should be one mind in the Church centered on the Bishop. Nothing is more excellent than this.

“As Christ does nothing without the Father, for says He, ‘I can of my own self do nothing’ (John 5:30), so do you; let no presbyter, deacon, or layman do anything without the bishop. Don’t let anything appear commendable to you which is destitute of his approval. For every such thing is sinful, and opposed to the will of God. All come together into the same place for prayer. Let there be one common supplication, one mind, one hope, with blameless faith in Christ Jesus; nothing is more excellent than this. As one man, run together into the temple of God, as to one altar, to one Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the Unbegotten God.”

Cyprian of Carthage emphasized¹¹⁸ that one can only be saved for sure in the Church; anywhere else, the risk is on us. Peter taught this using the example of Noah’s Ark; only those inside were saved for sure; those outside took their chances. Eating the sacrificial lamb at Passover also taught this, and Rahab was an example of the Church protecting her family during the siege of Jericho. Anyone outside her house was at risk.

“Peter showed that the Church is one, and that only they who are in the Church can be baptized. ‘In the ark of Noah, few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water; where the figure of baptism now saves us’ (1 Peter 3:20-21), proving that the one ark of Noah was a type of the one Church. In that baptism of the world, he who was in the ark of Noah could be saved by water; he who is in the Church to which alone baptism is granted, can also now be made alive by baptism. Paul, more openly and clearly still revealing this same thing, writes to the Ephesians, ‘Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water’ (Ephesians 5:25-26). But if the Church is one, which is loved by Christ, and is alone cleansed by His washing, how can he who is not in the Church be either loved by Christ, or washed and cleansed by His washing?”

“The Faith of the Scripture establishes that the Church cannot be separated or divided against itself, but maintains the unity of an inseparable and undivided house. In the sacrament of the Passover, the instructions regarding the sacrificial lamb, where the Lamb designated Christ, state ‘In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house’ (Exodus 12:46). We also see this expressed concerning Rahab, who herself was a type of the Church, and received the command, ‘You shall bring your father, and your mother, and your brethren, and all your father’s household to you into your house; whoever shall go out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head’ (Joshua 2:18-19). In this mystery is declared, that they who will live, and escape from the destruction of the world, must be gathered together into only one house, that is, into the Church. If anyone of those thus collected together shall go out of the Church, although he may have obtained grace in the Church, his blood shall be on his own head. That is, he must regard it as his own fault if he perishes. Paul explains this, teaching that a heretic must be avoided, as perverse and a sinner, and as condemned of himself. That man will be guilty of his own ruin, who, not being cast out by the bishop, but of his own accord deserts the Church.”

¹¹⁷ Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Magnesians, 7.

¹¹⁸ Cyprian of Carthage, Epistles, LXXV, 2, 4.

Cyprian of Carthage also stated¹¹⁹ that a heretic or a schismatic is a profane person and an enemy of the Lord's peace. Just as Jeroboam ripped off the Ten Tribes of Israel, so heretics rip Churches away from the Lord's flock. The ten tribes were rewarded for their heresy at the time of the Assyrian Captivity. Even 1000 years later, Jesus refused to allow the Apostles to preach immediately in Samaria, which is where the remnants of the Ten Tribes lived. Thus the saving water of baptism and heavenly grace can't be in common with those who promote schism.

“The Lord suggests to us a unity that comes from divine authority, saying, ‘I and my Father are one’ (John 10:30). He reduces His Church to this unity, saying, ‘There shall be one flock, and one shepherd’ (John 10:16). But if the flock is one, how can he be numbered among the flock, who is not in the number of the flock? While the true shepherd remains and presides over the Church of God by successive ordination, how can he be regarded a pastor of a real Church if he succeeds no one, and beginning a new thing from himself. He becomes a stranger and a profane person, an enemy of the Lord's peace and of the divine unity. He does not dwell in the house of God, that is, in the Church of God, in which none dwell except those that are of one heart and one mind.

“Even the Lord's sacrifices themselves declare that Christian unanimity is linked together with itself by a firm inseparable love. When the Lord calls bread, which is combined by the union of many grains, His body, He indicates our people as being united. When He calls the wine, which is pressed from many grapes and clusters and collected together, His blood, He also signifies our flock linked together by the mingling of a united multitude. How inseparable is the sacrament of unity, and how hopeless are they, and what excessive ruin they earn for themselves who make a schism. If someone forsakes his bishop and appoints another as a false bishop, Holy Scripture declares this in the books of Kings. Ten tribes were ripped away from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, and, forsaking their king, appointed for themselves another one outside. It says, ‘The Lord was angry with the whole seed of Israel; He agitated them, and delivered them into the hand of those that plundered them, until He cast them out of His Presence. Israel revolted from the house of David, and made Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, king’ (2 Kings 17:20-21 LXX). It says that the Lord was very angry, and gave them up to perdition, because they were scattered from unity, and had made another king for themselves. So great was the indignation of the Lord against those who had made the schism, that even when the man of God was sent to Jeroboam, to charge him with his sins, and predict the future vengeance, he was forbidden to eat bread or to drink water with them. When he did not observe this, and took food against the command of God, he was immediately struck by the majesty of the divine judgment, so that on his return he was slain on the way by the jaws of a lion (1 Kings 13). Does anyone dare to say that the saving water of baptism and heavenly grace can be in common with those who promote schism, with whom neither earthly food nor worldly drink ought to be in common? Moreover, the Lord satisfies us in His Gospel, and shows a still greater light of intelligence. The same persons who had divided themselves from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, and had seceded to Samaria¹²⁰, should be reckoned among profane persons and Gentiles. When He first sent His disciples on the ministry of salvation, He told them, ‘Do not go to the way of the Gentiles, and don't enter into any city of the Samaritans’ (Matthew 10:5). Sending them first to the Jews, He commanded that

¹¹⁹ Cyprian of Carthage, Epistles, LXXV, 5-6.

¹²⁰ That is, Samaria was the home of the Ten Northern Tribes who had revolted from the House of David.

the Gentiles should as yet be passed over, adding that even the cities of the Samaritans were to be omitted. Where there were those who promote schism, He shows that they were to be put on the same level as Gentiles.”

John Cassian stated¹²¹ that it is difficult to find one person to imitate. One person has wisdom; another has humility and another has patience. However, because of the unity of the Faith, for the present Christ is distributed member by member among all the saints. This will be our life experience until the Second Coming.

“If we want to gain all virtues from some one person, we shall with great difficulty or perhaps never at all find suitable examples for us to imitate. We do not as yet see that Christ is made ‘all things in all’ (1 Corinthians 15:28), as Paul says; still in this way we can find Him bit by bit in all. It is said of Him, ‘He became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness, sanctification and redemption’ (1 Corinthians 1:30). In one person there is found wisdom; in another, righteousness; in another, sanctification; in another, kindness; in another, chastity; in another, humility; in another, patience. Christ is at the present time distributed, member by member, among all of the saints. But when all come together into the unity of the faith and virtue, He is formed into the ‘perfect man’ (Ephesians 4:13), completing the fullness of His body, in the joints and properties of all His members. Until that time arrives, when God will be ‘all in all’, for the present, God can be ‘in all’, through particular virtues, although He is not yet ‘all in all’ through the fullness of them. Although our Faith has but one end and aim, yet there are different ways by which we approach God. So we must seek a model of discretion and continence more particularly from those from whom we see that those virtues flow more abundantly through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Not everyone can acquire all those things which are divided among many; but in order that we may progress in those good qualities of which we are capable, we may advance by the imitation of those who especially have acquired them.”

John Chrysostom stated¹²² that in the One Church, God has called us all on the same terms and all have received tremendous gifts, such that we sit with Him in the heavenly places. But there are specific spiritual gifts given to each person for the work of the Church, not for the honor of one person over another. The one who earned five talents received the same reward as the one who earned two talents; we disgrace the gift if we get stuck up over how much we receive. Each gift that a person receives is accompanied by an expectation to use it.

“There is ‘one body’; it is one both by sympathy, by not opposing the good of others, and by sharing their joy. He then beautifully adds, ‘and one Spirit’, showing that from the one body there will be one Spirit. There could be one body, and yet not one Spirit; for instance, if any member of it should be a friend of heretics. Then he adds, ‘Even as you were called in one hope of your calling’ (Ephesians 4:4); that is, God has called you all on the same terms. He has given to one more than to another. To all He has freely given immortality, to all eternal life, to all immortal glory, to all brotherhood, to all inheritance. He is the common Head of all; ‘He has raised all’ up, ‘and made them sit with Him’ (Ephesians 2:6-10). You then who in the spiritual world have so great equality of privileges, why is it that you are stuck up? Is it that one is wealthy and another strong? How ridiculous this is? If the emperor were to take ten persons, array

¹²¹ John Cassian, Twelve Books on the Institutes of the Coenobia, V, 4.

¹²² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XI, vv. 4-7.

them all in purple, seat them on the royal throne, and grant them all the same honor, would any one of these people venture to reproach another, as being wealthier or more illustrious than he? Never! And the difference is not so great in heaven as here below. There is 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism'. Behold 'the hope of your calling. There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all' (Ephesians 4:4-6). Can it be that you are called by the name of a greater God, and another is called by the name of a lesser God? That you are saved by faith, and another is saved by works? That you have received forgiveness in baptism, while another has not? 'There is one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all'. He is 'over all', in that He is the Lord and above all; He is 'through all' in that He provides for and orders all; He is 'in us all' in that He dwells in us all."

"'To each one of us was the grace given' (Ephesians 4:7). Paul asked, where did those diverse spiritual gifts come from? This subject was continually carrying away the Ephesians, the Corinthians, and many others, some into vain arrogance, and others into despondency or envy. Paul took along with him everywhere this illustration of the body of Christ. He entered into the subject more fully in the Epistle to the Corinthians, because this malady most especially reigned among them; to the Ephesians he has only alluded to it. Note what he said! He does not say, 'according to the faith of each', lest he should throw those who have no large attainments into despondency. Instead Paul said, 'According to the measure of the gift of Christ' (Ephesians 4:7). The chief points are common to all, that is, Baptism, being saved by faith, having God for our Father, all partaking of the same Spirit. If one man possesses any superiority in any spiritual gift, his labor also is greater. He that had received the five talents, had five more required of him; he that had received the two talents brought back only two more, and yet received no less a reward than the other. Therefore Paul encourages the hearer on the same ground, showing that gifts are given not for the honor of one above another, but for the work of the Church."

"Paul said that the gifts are 'For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministering for the edifying of the body of Christ' (Ephesians 4:12). Paul himself said, 'Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel!' (1 Corinthians 9:16) Paul received the grace of Apostleship; for this reason, 'woe to him' if he doesn't follow through; we don't have that gift so we are free from the associated danger."

"'Why does one receive more and another less 'according to the measure of Christ's gift?' (Ephesians 4:7) This means that we have received, 'not according to our merit', since we have all received the free gift. Our actions are not the cause of this, Paul would say, since everyone contributes towards 'the building'. He shows that it is not of his own intrinsic merit that one has received more and another less, but that it is for the sake of others, as God Himself has measured it" (1 Corinthians 12:18).

One God and Father of All

Paul stated, "There is one body and one Spirit, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). Sometimes today in listening to people in their relationship with God, one might think that God the Father was off on vacation somewhere. Everything is Jesus this and Jesus that. The Trinity is just not emphasized. The Son is the only person of the Trinity who took human form, but the Deity of the Godhead is beyond human

understanding. While Jesus reveals God the Father through His humanity, everyone needs the Holy Spirit just to understand this. Belief in God the Father is not enough for salvation; one must also believe that the Son was incarnate. But yet the Son's human flesh was not able to fully contain His Godhead. The Son was dwelling with His Father external to the universe as well as dwelling in the human body He assumed from the Virgin Mary. Let us hear what some of the Church Fathers had to say about this.

Cyril of Jerusalem gave¹²³ a brief description of the Unity of God in His majesty. He is sometimes described in characteristics humans can understand, but He is way beyond human understanding. Even the angels can only see Him as far as they are capable.

“For devotion it is enough for us simply to know that we have a God; a God who is One, an ever-living God; always like Himself; who has no Father, no one mightier than Himself, no successor to thrust Him out from His kingdom. He has many Names, is infinite in power, uniform in substance. He is called Good, Just, Almighty and Sabaoth¹²⁴, but He is not diverse and various because of that. He is one and the same; He sends forth countless operations of His Godhead, not exceeding here and deficient there, but being in all things like Himself. He is not great in loving-kindness only, and little in wisdom, but with wisdom and loving-kindness in equal portions. He does not see in part, and is blind in part; but is all eye, and all ear, and all mind. He is not like us perceiving in part and in part not knowing; for such a statement is blasphemous, and unworthy of Divinity. He foreknows the things that are; He is Holy and Almighty, and excels all in goodness, majesty and wisdom; of Him we can declare neither beginning, form or shape. ‘You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor have you seen His form’ (John 5:37). Therefore Moses said to Israel, ‘Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire’ (Deuteronomy 4:15). If it is wholly impossible to imagine His likeness, how shall thought come near His substance?”

“One He is; He is everywhere present, beholding all things, perceiving all things, creating all things through Christ. ‘All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made’ (John 1:3). A fountain of every good, abundant and unailing, a river of blessings, an eternal light of never-failing splendor, an insuperable power condescending to our infirmities. ‘Will you find out the tracks of the Lord?’, said Job, ‘Or have you come to the end of that which the Almighty has made?’ (Job 11:7 LXX) If the least of His works are incomprehensible, shall He be comprehended who made them all? ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him’ (1 Corinthians 2:9). If the things which God has prepared are incomprehensible to our thoughts, how can we comprehend with our mind Himself who has prepared them? ‘O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!’ (Romans 11:33). If His judgments and His ways are incomprehensible, can He Himself be comprehended?”

“Someone will say that it is written, ‘Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven’ (Matthew 18:10). But the angels don't see

¹²³ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, VI, 7, 9, 6.

¹²⁴ The word *Sabaoth* is a Hebrew word transliterated into Greek and means “of armies”. In connection with God, it means “of hosts”, as in Lord of hosts.

God as He is, but as far as they themselves are capable. For it is Jesus Himself who said, ‘No man has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father’ (John 6:46). The angels therefore behold as much as they can bear, and archangels as much as they are able; thrones and dominions behold more than these, but yet less than His worthiness; the Son and the Holy Spirit alone can rightly behold Him. ‘The Spirit searches all things and knows even the deep things of God. No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God’ (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). The Only-Begotten Son, with the Holy Spirit, knows the Father fully. No man knows the Father, only the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him’ (Matthew 11:27). He fully beholds; as each can bear, He reveals God through the Spirit, since the Only-Begotten Son together with the Holy Spirit is a partaker of the Father’s Godhead. Since Angels then are ignorant, let no man be ashamed to confess his own ignorance. How can I declare Him who has given us speech? I who have a soul, and cannot tell even the soul’s distinctive properties, how shall I be able to describe its Giver?”

Hilary of Poitiers stated¹²⁵ that the words “one God and one Lord” might seem to limit the property of “God” only to the Father. To understand this, spiritual gifts and the help of the Holy Spirit are needed, since belief in one God the Father is not enough for salvation.

“Paul said, ‘For us there is one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things, and we through Him’ (1 Corinthians 8:6). Again, ‘One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who *is* above all, and through all, and in us all’ (Ephesians 5:5-6). By these words ‘one God and one Lord’, it would seem that to God only is attributed the property of being God; since the property of oneness does not admit partnership with another.”

“How rare and hard to attain are such spiritual gifts! How truly is the Spirit revealed in the giving of such useful gifts! With reason has this order in the distribution of graces been appointed (1 Corinthians 12:8-10), that (1) the first should be the word of wisdom. ‘No one can call Jesus Lord but in the Holy Spirit’ (1 Corinthians 12:3), because only through this word of wisdom could Christ be understood to be Lord. (2) Next is the word of understanding that we might speak with understanding about what we know, and might know the word of wisdom. (3) The third-ranked gift consists of faith, seeing that those higher graces would be unprofitable gifts if we did not believe that He is God. In the true sense of Paul’s greatest utterance, no heretics possess either the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge or the true faith. Willful wickedness, being incapable of understanding, is void of the knowledge of the word and of genuineness of faith. No one utters what he does not know; nor can he believe that which he cannot utter; thus when Paul preached one God, a proselyte as He was from the Law, and called everyone to the Gospel of Christ, he has attained to the confession of a perfect faith.”

“The simplicity of an unguarded statement might give heretics an opportunity for denying, through the preaching of one God, the birth of the Son. Therefore, Paul has spelled out one God, while indicating His peculiar attributes in these words: ‘One God the Father, of Whom are all thing, and we in Him’, in order that He, Who is God, might also be acknowledged as Father. ‘Since this bare belief in one God the Father is not enough for salvation, Paul added, ‘And

¹²⁵ Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, VIII, 34.

one Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things, and we through Him', showing that the purity of saving faith consists in the preaching of one God and one Lord. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone that sees the Son and believes on Him should have eternal life (John 6:40). In fixing the order of the Church's faith, and basing our faith upon the Father and the Son, he has uttered the mystery of that indivisible and indissoluble unity and faith in the words one God and one Lord."

Athanasius of Alexandria stated¹²⁶ that Christ as a man did not have His Deity contained within His humanity; His Deity was included only within His Father. Men cannot influence things outside their bodies by acts of thought, since their being is included within their bodies. Christ was not bound by His human body, but was Himself controlling it. He was dwelling with His Father external to the universe, and is present in everything.

"Christ was not, as some might imagine, circumscribed in the body; while present in the body, He was also present elsewhere. While He moved the body, the universe was not left void of His working and Providence. The thing most marvelous is that although He was the Word, so far from being contained by anything, He rather contained all things Himself. While present in the whole of Creation, He is at once distinct in being from the universe, and present in all things by His own power. He gives order to all things, over all and in all revealing His own providence, and giving life to each thing and all things, including the whole without being included in it. His being is included in His own Father alone wholly and in every respect."

"Thus, even while present in a human body and Himself energizing it, He was, without inconsistency, enlivening the universe as well. He was in every process of nature, and was outside the whole; while known from the body by His works, He was none the less revealed from the working of the universe as well."

"It is the function of soul to view even what is outside its own body, by acts of thought, without working outside its own body, or moving things remote from the body. Never does a man, by thinking of things at a distance, either move or displace them. If a man were to sit in his own house and reason about the heavenly bodies, he cannot by that fact either move the sun or make the heavens revolve. But he sees that they move and have their being, without being actually able to influence them."

"Now, the Word of God in His man's nature was not like that; for He was not bound to His body, but rather was Himself controlling it. He was not only in it, but was actually in everything, and while external to the universe, abode within His Father only."

"This was the wonderful thing that He was at the same time walking as man, and as the Word was giving life to all things, and as the Son was dwelling with His Father. So that not even when the Virgin bore Him did He suffer any change, nor by being in the body was His glory dulled; but, on the contrary, He sanctified the body also."

"Not even by being in the universe does He share in its nature, but all things, on the contrary, are energized and sustained by Him."

"If the sun, which was made by Him, and which we see, as it revolves in the heaven, is not defiled by touching the bodies on earth, nor is it extinguished by darkness; on the contrary, itself illuminates and cleanses them. Much less was

¹²⁶ Athanasius of Alexandria, On the Incarnation of the Word, XVII, 1-7.

the all-holy Word of God, Maker and Lord also of the sun, defiled by being made known in the body. On the contrary, being incorruptible, He energized and cleansed the body also, which was in itself mortal. So it says, ‘no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth’” (1 Peter 2:22).

Hilary of Poitiers pointed out¹²⁷ that the Scriptures do not give us vague paths open to imagination regarding the definition of the Faith; it is easy to define one Lord, one Faith, one baptism and one God. Heretics who don’t fit this definition are not of the one Faith and preach another Christ.

“Paul reviewed the full and perfect mystery of the Gospel, saying, ‘You were called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, and through all, and in us all’ (Ephesians 4:4-6). He does not leave us on vague and misleading paths of an indefinite teaching, or abandon us to the shifting fancies of imagination, but limits the license of intellect by the appointment of restraining barriers. He gives us no opportunity to be wise beyond what he preached, but defines in exact and precise language the faith fixed for all time, that there may be no excuse for instability of belief. He declares one faith, as he preaches one Lord, and pronounces one baptism, as he declares one faith of one Lord. As there is one faith of one Lord, so there may be one baptism of one faith in one Lord. Since the whole mystery of the baptism and the faith is not only in one Lord, but also in one God, we must confess the one God. The one baptism and the one faith are of one God, as they are of one Lord. Lord and God are each one, not by union of person but by distinction of properties. On the one hand, it is the property of Each to be one, whether of the Father in His Fatherhood, or of the Son in His Son-ship. On the other hand, that property of individuality, which Each possesses, constitutes for Each the mystery of His union with the Other. Thus the one Lord Christ cannot take away from God the Father His Lordship and the one God the Father cannot deny to the one Lord Christ His Godhead. If Christ is not also by nature divine, then the one God cannot be Lord, because there is one Lord Christ; their ‘oneness’ would be signified not by the mystery, but an exclusive unity. So there is one baptism and one faith of one Lord, as of one God.”

“How can it be any longer one Faith, if it does not steadfastly confess one Lord and one God the Father? Referring to the various heretical opinions, how can the Faith be one, when its preachers are so at variance? One teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ, in weakness, groaned with anguish when the nails pierced His hands, that He lost the virtue of His own power and nature, and shrank shuddering from the death which threatened Him. Another denies the principal teaching of the Incarnation and pronounces Him a creature. Another might call Him God, but not think Him so, on the ground that the Faith allows us to speak of more Gods than one. How can Christ the Lord be one, when some say that as God He feels no pain; others make Him weak and fearful; to some He is God in name only; to others He is God in nature only; to some He is the Son only by His birth to Mary; to others He is just called the Son? If this is so, how can God the Father be one in the Faith, when to some He is Father by His authority, to others Father by generation?”

“Whatever is not the One Faith, is not faith at all. In the One Faith there is one Lord Christ, and God the Father is one. The one Lord Jesus Christ is not one

¹²⁷ Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, XI, 1-2.

in the truth of the confession, as well as in name, unless He is Son, God and unchangeable, and unless His Son-ship and His Godhead have been eternally present in Him. He who preaches Christ other than He is, that is, other than Son and God, preaches another Christ, and is not part of the One Faith of the one baptism.”

Ambrose of Milan defended¹²⁸ the Deity of the Holy Spirit to the Emperor. He is God with the Father and the Son through the Oneness of the Trinity. God can raise the dead; therefore the Holy Spirit raises the dead on some occasions also. By recognizing what is done, we also recognize the Oneness of God; by recognizing the nature of the Holy Spirit, we see that He is over all and in all.

“God has a Name which is above every name, and has given a name to the Son, that at the Name of Jesus knees should bow (Philippians 2:10). Let us consider whether the Spirit has this Name also. It is written, ‘Go, baptize the nations in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’ (Matthew 28:19); He has, then, a Name above every name. What, therefore, the Father and the Son have, the Holy Spirit also has through the oneness of the Name of His nature.

It is a prerogative of God to raise the dead. ‘As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to whom He wills’ (John 5:21). But the Spirit also raises them, for it is written, ‘He will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you’ (Romans 8:11). That you may not think that this is a trivial grace, learn that the Spirit also raises the dead, ‘Come, O Spirit, and breathe on these dead, and they shall live. So I prophesied, as He commanded me, and the Spirit of life entered into them and they lived, and stood up on their feet, an exceeding great assembly’ (Ezekiel 37:9-10 OSB LXX). And farther on God says, ‘Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I open your tombs to lead you, My people, up from their graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live’” (Ezekiel 37:13-14).

When He spoke of His Spirit, did He mention any other besides the Holy Spirit? He would neither have spoken of His Spirit as produced by blowing¹²⁹, nor could this Spirit come from the four quarters of the world; for the blowing of these winds, which we experience, is partial, not universal. This spirit by which we live is also individual, not universal. It is the nature of the Holy Spirit to be both over all and in all. Therefore from the words of the prophet we may see how the bones may come together again to the form of a revived body, when the Spirit gives them life. The ashes come together on their limbs, animated by a disposition to come together before being re-formed in the appearance of living.

Do we not in the likeness of what is done recognize the oneness of the Divine power? The Spirit raises after the same manner as the Lord was raised at the time of His Passion. Suddenly in the twinkling of an eye the graves of the dead were opened, and the bodies living again arose from the tombs, and the smell of death was removed (Matthew 27:51-53). The scent of life was restored, and the ashes of those who were dead took again the likeness of the living.

So, then, the Spirit has that which Christ has, and therefore what God has, for all things which the Father has the Son also has. Therefore He said, ‘All things which the Father has are Mine’ (John 16:15).

¹²⁸ Ambrose of Milan, Of the Holy Spirit, III, xix, 148-152.

¹²⁹ In Hebrew and in Greek, the word for spirit also is used to mean wind or blowing depending on the context.

Paul stated, “God the Father has put all things under Christ’s feet. But when He says ‘all things are put under Him’, it is evident that He who put all things under Him is exempted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:27-28).

Paul stated, “Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28). Ambrose of Milan stated¹³⁰ that the “subjection of Christ” that Paul spoke of refers first to Christ’s humanity, and second to a time in the future when the work of God will be perfected, but it is not a degrading subjection. So long as any of us humans are still imperfect, the work of God continues; at Christ’s return, things will change. To be “subject” implies obedience, as in Christ’s “obedience unto death”. At the Second Coming of Christ, all will obey, whether they want to or not; however those that don’t want to will be separated to their own place. Then God will be all and in all, and our humanity, which is the Body of Christ, will be perfected and subject to God. Those who receive this had already begun becoming subject as they served the Lord as represented by the “least of their brethren”, which is part of Christ’s humanity.

“Some say that Christ is now made subject, because many have believed. This is certainly not the case! Christ’s subjection that Paul spoke of lies not in the conversion of a few but in everyone. Just as I am not brought into subjection if my flesh still lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh (Galatians 5:17), so because the whole Church is the one body of Christ, we divide Christ as long as the human race disagrees. Therefore Christ is not yet made subject, for His members are not yet brought into subjection. But when we have become one spirit, then He also will become subject, in order that through His subjection ‘God may be all and in all’”.

“Since Christ is not yet made subject, so the work of God is not yet perfected; for the Son of God said, ‘My food is to do the will of My Father, and to finish His work’ (John 4:34). There is no doubt that the subjection of the Son in me is still in the future, in whom the work of the Father is unfinished, because I myself am not yet perfect. In so far as we are made subject, it is to our profit, not to that of the Godhead that we are made subject to the Law, that we are made subject to grace. The wisdom of the flesh was formerly at enmity with God, for ‘it was not made subject to the Law’ (Colossians 2:23); but now it is made subject through the Passion of Christ.”

“Let us then consider His subjection. ‘Father’, He said, ‘if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done’ (Luke 22:42). Therefore that subjection will be according to the assumption of human nature; as we read, ‘Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient to death’ (Philippians 2:8). The subjection therefore is that of obedience; the obedience is that of death; the death is that of the assumed humanity; that subjection therefore will be the subjection of the assumed humanity. Thus in no wise is there a weakness in the Godhead, but we do have a duty to obey Him.”

“That you might know that when Paul said, ‘That God may be all in all’ (1 Corinthians 15:28), he does not separate Christ from God the Father. Paul also said to the Colossians, ‘Where there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all’ (Colossians

¹³⁰ Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, V, 13-15, 168-169, 171, 176-177, 182.

3:11). Paul understood the unity and equality of Christ with God the Father, for the Son is not separated from the Father. In like manner as the Father works all and in all, so also Christ works all in all. If Christ also works all in all, He is not made subject in the glory of the Godhead, but in us. How is He made subject in us, except in the way in which He was made lower than the angels; I mean in the sacrament of His body? All things which have served their Creator from their first beginning seem not yet to be made subject to Him in that.”

“But if you should ask how He was made subject in us, He Himself shows us, saying: ‘I was in prison, and you came to Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these you have done it to Me’. You hear of Christ in subjection¹³¹, and are moved, though He is sick and weak in him in whom He is in subjection, in whom He was made sin and a curse for us.”

“Let us sum up a conclusion on this whole matter. A unity of power puts aside all ideas of a degrading subjection. His giving up of power, and His victory as conqueror over death, have not lessened His power. Obedience works out subjection. Christ has taken obedience upon Himself, obedience even to taking on Him our flesh and the cross to gain our salvation. Thus where the work lies, there too is the Author of the work. When all things have become subject to Christ, through Christ’s obedience, so that all bend their knees in His Name, then He Himself will be all in all. For now, since all do not believe, all do not seem to be in subjection. When all have believed and have done the will of God, then Christ will be all and in all. And when Christ is all and in all, then God the Father will be all and in all; for the Father abides always in the Son.”

Unity of Spirit

Paul writes that we are co-crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20). If the vine has died, so have the branches, for the life of the vine flows through the branches also. If the Head has died, so has the body for they share a common life. The death Paul speaks of is a death to sin and the life is an eternal life. Just as Christ took on the sin of the world when He died (John 1:29, 1 Peter 2:24), so we die to our sin in baptism.

Paul also writes that “if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection’ (Romans 6:5). The vine and the branches, the Head and the body are united in death and resurrection; all this is accomplished in a mystery through baptism (Romans 6:4). The ancient Church Fathers used the illustration of a sword in a fire to describe Christ’s two natures (God and man): the sword (humanity) doesn’t become fire (divinity). But after a while, the heat of the fire makes the sword glow like fire. The same is true about the branches being connected to the vine, and the body connected to the Head. We begin to take on characteristics of the Master. Similarly in ancient cultures, the queen (the wife) was empowered with the authority of the king (the husband) in his absence.

John Chrysostom wrote¹³² that there is a depth and a perfection of the Spirit’s relationship with the soul that goes beyond human understanding.

¹³¹ This is an eye-opening understanding. We really do serve Christ when we do things for the “least of these His brethren” (Matthew 25:34-40). Christ has permitted Himself to be dishonored by identifying Himself with the disadvantaged, in order that anyone may serve Him easily.

¹³² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, IX, v. 3.

“In the human body there is a spirit which holds all together, though in different members. So it is here also; for to this end was the Spirit given, that He might unite those who are separated by race and by different manners. For old and young, rich and poor, child and youth, woman and man, and every soul become in a manner one, and more entirely so than if there were one body. For this spiritual relation is far higher than the other natural one, and the perfection of the union is more entire; because the conjunction of the soul is more perfect, inasmuch as it is both simple and uniform”.

How does this work in real life? Paul writes, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him” (Romans 8:16-17). The Spirit in the vine bears witness with the spirit in the branches; the Spirit of the Head bears witness with the spirit of the body. This is how the organism functions as the Body of Christ. Vine and branches, Head and body suffer and are glorified together.

Cyprian of Carthage stated¹³³ that Christ established His authority in the Church around unity in the Bishop. He who separates himself from the Church or breaks the peace of Christ scatters the Church. The unity of God cannot be divided; this unity can be illustrated by the secure house of Rahab during the Conquest and by the eating of the Passover Sacrament. The unity of the Church can also be illustrated by the peaceful life of a dove, which is quite different than the lives of wolves, dogs, snakes and wild beasts.

“To all the Apostles, after His resurrection, Jesus gave an equal power, ‘As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. Receive the Holy Spirit; If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained’ (John 20:21-23). Yet, to establish unity, He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity, as beginning from one. The rest of the apostles were the same as Peter, given a partnership both of honor and power; but the beginning proceeds from unity. The Holy Spirit designated the one Church in the person of our Lord, ‘My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, the favorite of the one who bore her’ (Song of Solomon 6:9 LXX). The one who does not hold this unity of the Church does not hold the faith. He who strives against and resists the Church is not in the Church. Paul teaches the same thing, and sets forth the sacrament of unity, ‘There is one body and one spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God?’” (Ephesians 4:4)

“Whoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulteress is separated from the promises of the Church; he who forsakes the Church of Christ cannot attain to the rewards of Christ. He is a stranger; he is profane; he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother. If anyone could escape, who was outside the ark of Noah, then he also may escape, who shall be outside of the Church. The Lord warns, ‘He who is not with me is against me, and he who gathers not with me scatters’ (Matthew 12:30). He, who breaks the peace and the concord of Christ, does so in opposition to Christ. He who gathers elsewhere than in the Church, scatters the Church of Christ.”

¹³³ Cyprian of Carthage, Treatise on the Unity of the Church, I, 4, 6, 8-9.

“Who is so wicked and faithless that he should believe that the unity of God can be divided? Christ says, ‘There shall be one flock and one shepherd’ (John 10:16). Paul urges us, ‘I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment’ (1 Corinthians 1:10). Again, ‘Bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’ (Ephesians 4:3). Do you think that you can stand and live if you withdraw from the Church, building for yourself other homes and a different dwelling?”

“Therefore the Holy Spirit came as a dove, a simple and joyous creature, not bitter with gall, cruel in its bite, violent with the tearing of its claws, loving human dwellings, knowing the association of one home. When they have young, they bring out their young together; when they migrate, they remain in their flight by the side of one another, spending their life in mutual communication, acknowledging the concord of peace with the kiss of the beak, in all things fulfilling the law of unanimity. This is the simplicity that ought to be known in the Church; this is the love that ought to be attained; in order that the love of the brotherhood may imitate the doves that their gentleness and meekness may be like lambs and sheep. What does the fierceness of wolves, the savageness of dogs, the deadly venom of snakes, and the bloody cruelty of wild beasts have to do with Christianity? We should be congratulated when such as these are separated from the Church, lest they should lay waste the doves and sheep of Christ with their cruel and venomous disease. Bitterness cannot coexist with sweetness, darkness with light, battle with peace. Let no one think that the good can depart from the Church. The wind does not carry away the wheat, nor does the hurricane uproot the tree that is based on a solid root. It is the light straws that are tossed around by the wind; the feeble trees are overthrown by the twisters. The Apostle John denounces these, ‘They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, surely they would have continued with us’” (1 John 2:19).

Clement of Rome wrote of a counter example to Unity of Spirit in a letter strongly criticizing¹³⁴ the Corinthians about 40 years after the Apostle Paul wrote his epistles to them. Some of the Corinthians had deposed several of the Corinthian Bishops for no apparent reason. Clement noted that throughout history it is only evil men that have persecuted the righteous. The Corinthians should consider the Lord’s words concerning stumbling blocks and how their schism subverts the faith of some people. The Corinthians had been renowned for their brotherly love; they now need to beg the Lord with tears to restore them to their former practice.

“You are fond of contention, brethren, and are full of zeal about things which do not pertain to salvation. Look carefully into the Scriptures, which are the true utterances of the Holy Spirit. Observe that nothing of an unjust character is written in them. The righteous were not cast off by men who themselves were holy. The righteous were indeed persecuted, but only by the wicked. They were thrown into prison, but only by the unholy; they were stoned, but only by transgressors; they were killed, but only by the accursed, and such as had conceived an unrighteous envy against them. Exposed to such suffering, they endured it gloriously. Was Daniel thrown into the lions’ den by those that feared God? (Daniel 6:16) Were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shut up in a fiery furnace by those who observed the great and glorious worship of the Most High?

¹³⁴ Clement of Rome, 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, 45-48.

(Daniel 3:20) Far from us be such a thought! Who, then, were those that did such things? The hateful and those full of wickedness were roused to such a pitch of fury, that they inflicted torture on those who served God with a holy and blameless purpose of heart, not knowing that the Most High is the Defender of all who venerate His all-excellent Name with a pure conscience. Those who with confidence endured these things are now heirs of glory and honor.”

“We should follow such examples; since it is written, ‘With the holy will you be holy, and with an innocent man will you be innocent; and with a perverse man will you show disobedience’ (Psalm 18:25-26 LXX). Let us cling to the innocent and righteous, since these are the elect of God. ‘Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?’ (James 4:1) Have we not all one God and one Christ? Is there not one Spirit of grace poured out upon us? Have we not one calling in Christ? (Ephesians 4:4-6) Why do we divide and tear to pieces the members of Christ, and raise up strife against our own body. You have reached such a height of madness as to forget that ‘you are members of one another’ (Romans 12:5). Remember the words¹³⁵ of our Lord Jesus Christ, ‘Woe to that man by whom offenses come! It would have been better for him if he had never been born, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my elect. It would be better for him that a millstone should be hung around his neck, and he should be sunk in the depths of the sea, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my little ones’. Your schism has subverted the faith of many, has discouraged many, has given rise to doubt in many, and has caused grief to us all. And still your sedition continues.”

“What did Paul write to you? He wrote concerning himself, Cephas and Apollos, because even then factions had been formed among you (1 Corinthians 3:3-5). But that inclination for one above another generated less guilt upon you than now. Then your partialities were towards Apostles, already of high reputation, and towards a man whom they had approved. But now reflect who those are that have perverted you, and lessened the renown of your far-famed brotherly love. It is highly disgraceful and unworthy of your Christian profession, that the most steadfast and ancient Church of the Corinthians should engage in sedition against its presbyters on account of one or two persons. This rumor has not only reached us, but also those who are unconnected with us. Through your infatuation, the name of the Lord is blasphemed, and danger is also brought on yourselves.”

“Put an end to this, fall down before the Lord and beg Him with tears, that He would mercifully be reconciled to us, and restore us to our former holy practice of brotherly love. Such conduct is the gate of righteousness, which is set open for the attainment of life, as it is written, ‘Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go in by them, and give praise to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter in by it’ (Psalm 118:19-20 LXX). Although many gates have been set open, this gate of righteousness is that gate in Christ by which blessed are all they that have entered in and have directed their way in holiness and righteousness, doing all things without disorder. Let a man be faithful; let him be powerful in the utterance of knowledge. Let him be wise in judging words; let him be pure in all his deeds. Yet the more he seems to be

¹³⁵ This is a combination of Matthew 18:6, 26:24, Mark 9:42, Luke 17:2.

superior to others in these respects, the more humble-minded he ought to be, seeking the common good of all.”

John Chrysostom stated¹³⁶ that this brotherly connection is true freedom and is a stronger relationship than anything else:

“This is a bond that doesn’t bruise, nor does it cramp the hands it binds, but it leaves them free, and gives them ample play, and greater courage than those which are at liberty. The strong, if he is bound to the weak, will support him and not allow him to perish. If he were tied to the lazy, him he will rouse and animate. ‘Brother helped by brother is as a strong city’ (Proverbs 18:19 LXX). This chain no distance of place can interrupt, neither heaven, nor earth, nor death, nor anything else, but it is more powerful and strong than all things”.

The result is that we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37). For anything to prevail against the branches it has to take on the Vine; for anything to prevail against the body, it has to take on the Head.

¹³⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, IX, v. 3.

PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL

November 22, 2015
9th Sunday of Luke
Revision E

Gospel: Luke 12:16-21

Today's Gospel lesson is commonly used in the West also, either for the 1st or 13th Sunday after Trinity.

Gospel: Luke 12:16-21	296
Background for the Parable of the Rich Fool.....	296
The Burden of Wealth.....	297
The Definition of "Fool"	298
Becoming Rich Toward God	299
The Transient Nature of This Life.....	305

Background for the Parable of the Rich Fool

The Parable of the Rich Fool is part of a series of teachings that is recorded almost entirely in Luke. This series begins in Luke 10:1 with the sending out of the Seventy (of which Luke himself was a member), and continues to Luke 18. The time frame for these events is late 29 AD and early 30 AD.

As the Gospel lesson begins, someone in the crowd asked Jesus to mediate a dispute over an inheritance (Luke 12:13). It was a tradition for respected rabbis to arbitrate personal disputes over property or money¹³⁷. Jesus however refused to take this role (Luke 12:14). Instead, he said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). This incident led Jesus to tell the parable of the Rich Fool.

Jesus had begun teaching people over a year earlier to beware of getting trapped into having their life and happiness depend on their possessions. For example, in mid 28 AD, during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of not worrying about one's life in terms of food, clothing, and shelter (Matthew 6:25). The analogy Jesus made then was the birds and the flowers: they don't sow, reap or gather into storehouses, nor do they spin thread or sew clothing. Yet they are well provided for by their Heavenly Father (Matthew 6:25-33). Following the Parable of the Rich Fool, Jesus repeated the same message for the people here in Judea (Luke 12:22-31) that He gave to the people just outside Capernaum at the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:19-34).

Under the Old Covenant, there was a relationship between the fruitfulness of the land and the peoples' obedience to God (Deuteronomy 28:1-2). As the people were faithful to honor the Lord and love their neighbor, "the Lord will command the blessing upon you in your storehouses and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the Land which the Lord your God

Copyright © Mark Kern 2006

¹³⁷ Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994, pp. 119-120.

gives you” (Deuteronomy 28:8). As they were generous with their bounty (Deuteronomy 14:28, 29; 26:12-15; 15:7-11), “The Lord will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow” (Deuteronomy 28:12; 15:6). Thus they were to be a holy people, chosen to be a people of His own possession out of all the people on the face of the earth (Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, 26:19, 28:1).

In the 1st Century grain was stored in large structures similar to crude grain elevators today. There was an opening at the top for putting grain in and an opening at the bottom for removing it. The walls of these “barns” or silos were thick, made of brick, and the inside walls were plastered. Thus the grain could be kept dry and away from pests for storage for many years¹³⁸. In ancient civilizations, entire cities were sometimes devoted to the storage of grain, wine and oil (1 Kings 9:19, 2 Chronicles 8:4-6, 16:4, 17:12, 32:28, Exodus 1:11). When the rich man said to himself, “You have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry” (Luke 12:19), this was a realistic expectation for him. And it put him in a commanding position economically just as it was for Joseph in Egypt when Joseph was in charge of the Egyptian storehouses (Genesis 41:28-57). When he died suddenly, however, the question is whether the new silos were built yet, and whether the old silos had already been torn down. If the old silos were torn down, there was no one to supervise construction of the new ones, or pay the workers for building them. If the old silos were still there, but the new ones had not been finished yet, there was no place to store the excess grain. In order that the grain might not be wasted, it would probably just be distributed to the poor – which is what the rich man should have done anyway.

The Burden of Wealth

The parable began with a rich man’s land yielding plentifully (Luke 12:16). But this rich man did not respond according to the Mosaic Law to the bounty of his land. According to the Mosaic Law, the more he obtained, the more generous he was to be. Instead, he decided to keep it all for himself; since he couldn’t even store it all; he decided to build bigger storehouses (Luke 12:18).

Cyril of Alexandria commented¹³⁹ to say that the rich man was speaking like someone in poverty due to the poverty of his spiritual awareness.

“What, therefore, does the rich man do, surrounded by a profusion of so many blessings beyond all numbering? In distress and anxiety he utters the words of poverty. ‘For what’, he says, ‘shall I do?’ The man who is in want of necessities constantly emits this miserable language; but here one of boundless wealth uses similar expressions. He determined then to build more spacious storehouses; he purposed to enjoy for himself alone those revenues that were sufficient for a populous city. He doesn’t look to the future; he doesn’t raise his eyes to God; he doesn’t count it worth his while to gain those treasures, which are above in heaven. He doesn’t cherish love for the poor, nor desire the estimation to be gained thereby; he doesn’t sympathize with suffering; it gives him no pain, nor awakens his pity. And what is still more irrational, he settles for himself the duration of his life, as if he would reap this

¹³⁸ Ralph Gower, Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Moody Press, Chicago, 1987, p. 101.

¹³⁹ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Gospel of Luke, Chapter 12, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 361..

too from the ground; for he says, 'I will say to myself, Self, you have goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, enjoy yourself.'"

However, God referred to him as a fool. "This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" (Luke 12:20). This connects right back to the dispute over an inheritance that started the Parable (Luke 12:13). Now someone else has an inheritance to fight over, which goes right back to the question that started the Parable.

The Definition of "Fool"

The term "fool" in an Old Testament culture carried more connotations than it does in English today. Consider Matthew 5:22; Jesus said that whoever calls his brother a fool shall be in danger of hell-fire. In our English culture, calling someone a fool is no big deal; stand up comedians make big money doing just that. To understand the connotations involved, we need to go primarily to the writings of Solomon: Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

Riches and fools are an often-recurring theme in the writings of Solomon. Solomon himself was very rich; and as king, met his share of fools. Table 1 is a compilation of the writings of Solomon regarding the characteristics of fools as compared to the wise. Two Hebrew words are used to convey these characteristics: "*kesil*" meaning a fool in the sense of a stupid person and "*evil*" meaning generally a fool.

Some trends apparent from Table 1 are that a fool does not fear God and even denies He exists. He thinks himself to be wise and is always right in his own eyes, but he does not seek wisdom or knowledge. He is quarrelsome, temperamental and arrogant; one can't tell him anything or make him change his behavior. He's perverse, deceitful and spreads slander; he mocks the idea that he might be sinning. This reads like an indictment of our generation. Solomon contrasts the wise man as having opposite characteristics.

Psalms 49 might also be titled, "The Parable of the Rich Fool" and is a more detailed version of the same theme as the Gospel lesson. Jesus may even have drawn the Parable of the Rich Fool from Psalm 49. The Psalm was written as a riddle and a proverb (Psalm 49:3, 4), and set to a string accompaniment (Psalm 49:4). A number of themes are included:

- One need not fear even though surrounded by wealthy men working iniquity. All their wealth can't even redeem their brother never mind buy eternal life (Psalm 49:5-9).
- Everyone will die, rich and fool alike, and leave their wealth to others. They may think their houses are forever and even name their land after themselves; but it won't endure. This is the way of the foolish (Psalm 49:10-13).
- They are sheep appointed for Sheol with death as their shepherd. God will redeem the righteous from Sheol and the righteous shall rule over them in the morning (Psalm 49:14-15).
- Do not be afraid of a rich man when the glory of his house increases. When he dies, he will carry nothing away and his glory does not descend after him. He will never see the Light; he is without understanding; and he is like an animal that perishes (Psalm 49:16-20).

Table 1
Characteristics of Fools Versus the Wise

The Fool	The Wise	Reference
Toward God		
Denies existence of God	Seeks God	Psalm 14:1,2; 55:1,2
Speaks error against Lord	Fears Lord	Isaiah 32:6, Proverbs 1:7
Sacrifice of Fools	Guards steps	Ecclesiastes 5:1, 4
On Understanding		
Thinks self wise, but hates knowledge, wisdom	Has wisdom	Proverbs 1:22, 14:33, 1:7, 17:16 Romans 1:22
Right in his own eyes	Listens to counsel	Proverbs 10:8, 12:15, 18:2, 26:5, 12, 28:26, Ecclesiastes 10:6
Feeds on folly	Seeks knowledge	Proverbs 15:14, 16:22
Walks in darkness	Eyes in head	Ecclesiastes 2:14
Behavior		
Arrogant & careless	Turns from evil	Proverbs 14:16, Ecclesiastes 7:7
Rejects father's discipline	Regards reproof	Proverbs 15:5, 17:21, 25
Even blows won't correct	Rebuke goes deep	Proverbs 17:10, 19:29, 26:3, 27:22
Quarrelsome	Avoids strife	Proverbs 20:3, 27:3
Sport = wickedness	Sport = wisdom	Proverbs 7:22, 10:23, Isaiah 32:6, 7
Always loses temper	Holds his anger	Proverbs 29:11, Ecclesiastes 7:9
Companions suffer harm	Companions wise	Proverbs 13:20, Psalm 107:17
Control of Tongue		
Speaks slander, deceit	Restrains lips	Proverbs 10:18, Ecclesiastes 10:12, Isaiah 32:7
Mocks sin	Has goodwill	Proverbs 14:9
Perverse, hasty in speech	Feeds many with lips	Proverbs 10:21, 17:7, 19:1, 29:20
Spouts folly	Builds bridges	Proverbs 15:2, Ecclesiastes 10:13

These are very strong words; but they fit the context of our Gospel lesson quite well (compare Luke 12:19-20).

Becoming Rich toward God

In contrast to the behavior of the rich fool, the Lord encourages us to be “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21). There are two parts to this: (1) discovering what are the riches of God, and (2) determining how one obtains such.

The key to both is faith: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). If we could see what it is we’re hoping for, it wouldn’t be hope and we wouldn’t need faith (Romans 8:24).

Concerning the riches of God, we are told of the riches of His kindness (Romans 2:4, Ephesians 2:7), the riches of His glory (Romans 9:23, Ephesians 1:18, Philippians 4:19, Colossians 1:27) and the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7, 2:7). These riches are unsearchable (Ephesians 3:8) and have incredible depth in wisdom and knowledge and judgment (Romans 11:33). Yet the riches of God are also a mystery (Colossians 1:27). He bestows His riches equally to Jews and Gentiles who call upon Him (Romans 11:12, Colossians 1:27). But it takes the eyes of faith to see it. Moses saw it (through faith) and regarded the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Hebrews 11:26).

Concerning one's obtaining the riches of God; earthly riches can get in the way. In cases of fixation on earthly riches, Jesus advised people to sell everything and give to the poor in order that they might have treasure in heaven (Luke 12:33, Matthew 19:21). The Rich Young Ruler was so fixated on earthly riches that he couldn't do this (Matthew 19:22, Luke 18:23). Treasure in heaven is described as wealth that doesn't grow old, that doesn't fail, that can't be stolen and that can't deteriorate (Luke 12:33).

Leo the Great stated¹⁴⁰ that we should be thankful no matter what we have received from God, much or little. To do otherwise is to blame Him and murmur against Him. All things are in His hand, and whatever pleases Him should please us also.

“God wishes us to be good, because He is good; none of His judgments ought to displease us. If we don't give Him thanks in all things, what else is it but we blame Him in some degree. Man's folly too often dares to murmur against his Creator, not only in time of lack, but also in time of plenty, so that, when something is not supplied, we complain, and when certain things are in abundance we are ungrateful. The man who had rich harvests scorned his well-filled silos, and groaned over his abundant grape-gathering; he did not give thanks for the size of the crop, but complained of no place to store it. If the ground has been less prolific than usual, and the vines and the olives have failed in their supply of fruit, the year is accused, the elements are blamed, and curses fill the air and the sky. On the other hand, nothing better fits the faithful disciples of Truth than the persistent lifting of praise to God. As Paul says, ‘Rejoice always, pray without ceasing; in all things give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus in all things for you’ (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). But how shall we be partakers of this devotion, unless changes of fortune train our minds in steadfastness, so that the love directed towards God may not be puffed up in prosperity nor faint in adversity. Let that, which pleases God, please us too. Let us rejoice in whatever measure of gifts He gives. Let him who has used great possessions well use small ones well also! Plenty and scarcity may be equally for our good, and even in spiritual progress we shall not be downcast at small results, if our minds have not become dry and barren. Let this spring from the soil of our heart. He that continues to be generous will always be supplied with means to give. Therefore let us use all the works of godliness that each year gives us, and let not seasons of difficulty hinder our Christian benevolence. The Lord knows how to replenish the widow's vessels, which her pious deed of hospitality has emptied (1 Kings 17:8-16). He knows how to turn water into wine (John 2:1-10); He knows how to satisfy 5,000 hungry persons with a few loaves (Matthew 14:15-21).”

Paul advised Timothy concerning those in his area who were wealthy that they trust in God rather than their earthly riches. Especially, Paul said, “Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:17-19). By our deeds, our good works, we treasure up for ourselves glory, honor and immortality (Romans 2:8-10 loosely). These deeds or good works are written (and treasured) in books in heaven (Revelation 20:12). On the basis of these books plus the Book of Life, everyone is judged (Revelation 20:12-15).

John Cassian stated¹⁴¹ that covetousness could only be overcome by stripping oneself of everything. Examples he used are the Apostle Judas, Ananias and Sapphira and Elisha's servant,

¹⁴⁰ Leo the Great, Sermons, XII, 3.

Gehazi. Jesus allowed Judas to steal from the moneybag to curb his covetousness, but it didn't satisfy him. Ananias and Sapphira lied to escape poverty because of covetousness. Like Gehazi¹⁴², they were all lepers in spirit and heart. We need to consider our weak and shifty nature in order that we don't get carried away like the rich fool.

“The tyranny of avarice, once the mind is taken prisoner by it, allows it to keep to no rules of honesty, nor to be satisfied with any additions to its gains. We must seek to put an end to this madness, not by riches, but by stripping ourselves of them. Judas had received the bag set apart for the distribution to the poor, which was entrusted to his care, that he might at least satisfy himself with plenty of money, and set a limit to his avarice. Yet his plentiful supply only broke out into a still greedier incitement of desire, so that he was ready no longer secretly to rob the bag, but actually to sell the Lord Himself. For the madness of this avarice is not satisfied with any amount of riches.”

“Peter, taught by these instances, and knowing that someone who has avarice cannot bridle it, and that it cannot be ended by a large or small sum of money, but only by the renunciation of everything, punished with death Ananias and Sapphira, who had kept back something out of their property. The death, which Judas had voluntarily met with for the sin of betraying the Lord, they might also undergo for their lying avarice (Acts 5:1-11). How closely do the sin and punishment correspond in each case! In the one case treachery, in the other falsehood, was the result of covetousness. For though the issues of their deeds may appear different, yet they coincide in having one and the same aim. Judas, in order to escape poverty, desired to take back what he had forsaken¹⁴³. The others, for fear lest they might become poor, tried to keep back something out of their property, which they should have either offered to the Apostle in good faith, or have given entirely to the brethren. In each case the judgment of death follows, because each sin sprang from the root of covetousness. If there resulted so severe a sentence against those, who did not covet other persons' goods, but tried to be sparing of their own, what should we think of those who desire to amass wealth, without ever having had any of their own. That is, if we make a show of poverty before men, but before God we are convicted of being rich through the passion of avarice, how will we fare?”

“Such are seen to be lepers in spirit and heart, after the likeness of Gehazi, who desired the uncertain riches of this world, and was covered with the taint of foul leprosy (2 Kings 5:20-27). He left us a clear example that every soul which is defiled with the stain of avarice is covered with the spiritual leprosy of sin, and is counted as unclean before God with a perpetual curse.”

“Keeping then in mind the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira, let us dread keeping back any of those things which we gave up and vowed to forsake. Let us also fear the example of Gehazi, who for the sin of covetousness was chastised with the punishment of perpetual leprosy. From this let us beware of acquiring that wealth which we never formerly possessed. Moreover dreading both the fault

¹⁴¹ John Cassian, *Institutes of the Coenobia*, VII, 24-26, 30.

¹⁴² Elisha had just healed Naaman of leprosy. Naaman offered Elisha a present of a great deal of gold, silver and clothing, but like all the Unmercenary Healers, Elisha would not accept payment for what he had been freely given. Gehazi, however, ran after Naaman and asked for a small portion of the gift Naaman offered. Naaman was happy to give it to Gehazi. When Gehazi returned to Elisha, Elisha informed him that he had also inherited Naaman's leprosy because of his covetousness.

¹⁴³ Judas, along with the rest of the Twelve, had left everything in following Jesus (Matthew 19:27-29). Yet Judas was in charge of the money box containing alms for the poor, and he pilfered what was in it (John 12:6).

and the death of Judas, let us with all the power that we have, avoid taking back any of that wealth, which we once cast away from us. Above all, considering the state of our weak and shifty nature, let us beware lest the day of the Lord come upon us as a thief in the night, and find our conscience defiled even by a single penny. This would void all the fruits of our renunciation of the world, and cause that which was said to the rich man to be directed towards us also. ‘You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you; then whose shall those things be which you have prepared? (Luke 12:20) And taking no thought for tomorrow, let us never allow ourselves to be enticed away.’”

Cyprian of Carthage exhorted¹⁴⁴ his people very strongly to demonstrate their faith by their works (James 2:18-26), where offerings to the Church and to the poor are the best investment one can make. The righteous man will never lack for resources, and he who feeds Christ will be himself fed by Christ. We sometimes bring forward vain excuses regarding why we can’t do this, and the Parable of the Rich Fool is a warning to us. Those who think themselves rich in this world are deceived and cannot properly labor in the Church or celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Their eyes are covered with the gloom of blackness, and they cannot see their brothers, the poor and needy, with whom they share the Christian life.

“Are you afraid that your inheritance may fall short, if you begin to give liberally from it? Yet when has it ever happened that resources have failed the righteous man, since it is written, ‘The Lord will not slay the righteous soul with famine’ (Proverbs 10:3 LXX). Ravens fed Elijah in the desert (1 Kings 17:1-6); and a meal from heaven was made ready for Daniel in the lions’ den¹⁴⁵. And you are afraid that food should be lacking to you, laboring and deserving well of the Lord? He Himself bears witness, for the rebuke of those whose mind is doubtful and whose faith is small, ‘Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?’ (Matthew 6:26) God feeds the birds, and daily food is available to the sparrows; to creatures, which have no sense of divine things, there is no lack of food or drink. Do you think that to a Christian, to a servant of the Lord, to one given to good works, to one that is dear to his Lord, anything will be lacking?”

“Do you imagine that he who feeds Christ is not himself fed by Christ, or that earthly things will be lacking to those to whom heavenly and divine things are given? Where does this unbelieving thought, this impious and sacrilegious consideration come from? What does a faithless heart do in the home of faith? Why is he, who does not trust in Christ, called a Christian? The name of Pharisee is more fitting for you. When the Lord was speaking about almsgiving, He warned us to make to ourselves friends of our earthly lucre by provident good works, which might afterwards receive us into eternal dwellings. The Scripture added after this, ‘But the Pharisees heard all these things, who were very covetous, and they derided Him’ (Luke 16:14). Some people like this we see now in the Church, whose closed ears and darkened hearts admit no light from spiritual and saving warnings. We need not wonder that they criticize the servants of God, when we see the Lord Himself was despised by such.”

¹⁴⁴ Cyprian of Carthage, Treatises, VIII, 11-15.

¹⁴⁵ Lancelot C. L. Brenton, The Septuagint with Apocrypha, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA 01961, 1990, p. 138. Bel and the Dragon 1:30-39.

“Why do you applaud yourself in those vain and silly conceits, as if you were withheld from good works by fear for the future? Why do you lay out before yourself certain shadows and omens of a vain excuse? Confess what is the truth; and since you cannot deceive those who know, utter the secret and hidden things of your mind. The gloom of barrenness has besieged your mind; and while the light of truth has departed, the deep and profound darkness of avarice has blinded your carnal heart. You are the captive and slave of your money; you are bound with the chains and bonds of covetousness; and you whom Christ had once loosed, are once more in chains. You keep your money, which, when kept, does not keep you. You heap up an inheritance, which burdens you with its weight; and you do not remember what God answered to the rich man, who boasted with a foolish exultation of the abundance of his exuberant harvest. ‘You fool’, He said, ‘this night your soul is required of you; then whose shall those things be which you have provided?’ (Luke 12:20) Why do you watch in loneliness over your riches? Why, for your own punishment, do you heap up the burden of your inheritance, that in proportion as you are rich in this world, you may become poor to God? Divide your returns with the Lord your God; share your gains with Christ; make Christ a partner with you in your earthly possessions, that He also may make you a fellow-heir with Him in His heavenly kingdom.”

“Those are mistaken, and are deceived, that think themselves rich in this world. Listen to the voice of your Lord rebuking men like you with righteous reproaches. ‘You say I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and you don’t know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white clothing, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness may not appear in you; and anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that you may see’ (Revelation 3:17-18). You therefore, who are rich, buy for yourself from Christ gold tried by fire; that you may be pure gold, with your filth burned out as if by fire, if you are purged by almsgiving and righteous works. Buy for yourself white clothing, that you who had been naked according to Adam, may be clothed with the white garment of Christ. And you who are a wealthy and rich matron in Christ’s Church, anoint your eyes, not with the eye wash of the devil, but with Christ’s eye wash, that you may be able to attain to see God, by deserving well of God, both by good works and character.”

“You who are such as this cannot labor in the Church. For your eyes, overcast with the gloom of blackness, and shadowed in night, do not see the needy and poor. You are wealthy, and do you think that you celebrate the Lord’s Supper, not at all considering the offering, who come to the Lord’s Supper without a sacrifice, and yet take part of the sacrifice, which the poor man has offered? Consider the widow that remembered the heavenly precepts, doing good even amid the difficulties and straits of poverty, casting two mites, which were all that she had, into the treasury. The Lord observed and saw, regarding her work not for its abundance, but for its intention, and considering not how much, but from how much, she had given. He answered, ‘Truly I say unto you, that widow has cast in more than anyone into the offerings of God. For everyone else has cast in to the offerings of God of that which they had in abundance; but she out of her poverty has cast in all that she had’ (Luke 21:3-4). Greatly blessed and glorious woman, who even before the Day of Judgment has merited to be praised by the voice of the Judge! Let the rich be ashamed of their barrenness and unbelief. The widow, needy in means, is found rich in works. And although

everything that is given is conferred upon widows and orphans, she gives, who ought to receive, that we may know from this what punishment awaits the barren rich man, when by this instance even the poor ought to labor in good works. And in order that we may understand that their labors are given to God, and that whoever performs them deserves well of the Lord, Christ calls this ‘the offerings of God’. He intimates that the widow has cast in two mites into the offerings of God, that it may be more abundantly evident that he who has pity on the poor lends to God.”

Clement of Alexandria stated¹⁴⁶ that the issue in choosing between God and mammon involves neither fear of punishment nor the promise of earthly gifts, since both produce mere hirelings. We should want to do this, and not have to be driven by punishment or lured by earthly gifts into it. We should desire to seek the good and live according to the likeness of Christ and not according to the love of money, which He calls “mammon”. Honor, marriage and even voluntary poverty can produce the same effects and “choke” the word of God for us if it’s not something we freely choose to do. Our true treasure is in what produces righteousness in our lives.

“We must pursue the word of salvation neither from fear of punishment nor from promise of a gift, but on account of the good itself. Those who do so stand on the right hand of the sanctuary (Matthew 25:32-40, Hebrews 8:1, 1:3). But those who think that by the gift of what is perishable they shall receive immortality in exchange are, in the parable of the two brothers, called ‘hirelings’ (Matthew 21:28-31). This sheds some light on the expression ‘in the likeness and image’ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Some live according to the likeness of Christ, while those who stand on the left hand live according to their own image. To choose by imitation differs from him who chooses according to knowledge, as that which is set on fire differs from that which is illuminated”.

“What does the parable of Lazarus mean, by showing the image of the rich and poor? (Luke 16:19-26) And what does the saying mean, ‘No man can serve two masters, God and mammon?’ (Matthew 6:24), the Lord so terming the love of money. For instance, the covetous, who were invited, did not respond to the invitation to the supper (Luke 14:15-23), not because of their possessing property, but because of their inordinate affection to what they possessed”.

For not riches only, but also honor, marriage and poverty, have ten thousand cares for him who is unfit for them. And those cares He indicated in the Parable of the Sower, when He said that ‘the seed of the word which fell among the thorns’ (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23) was choked by them, and could not bring forth fruit. It is therefore necessary to learn how to make use of every occurrence, so as by a good life, to be trained for eternal life. For it said, ‘I saw the wicked exalted and towering as the cedars of Lebanon; and I passed’, says the Scripture, ‘and he was not. And I sought him, and his place was not found. Keep innocence, and look on uprightness; for there is a remnant to the man of peace’ (Psalm 37:35-37 LXX, Isaiah 2:12-14). Such will he be who believes unpretentiously with his whole heart, and is tranquil in his whole soul. ‘For

¹⁴⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, IV, 6.

different people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from the Lord' (Isaiah 29:13).

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust destroy, and thieves break through and steal' (Matthew 6:19), says the Lord, in reproach to the covetous, to those who are full of cares, and to those who indulge their bodies. For amours, diseases, and evil thoughts '*break through*' the mind. But our true 'treasure' is where what is allied to our mind is, since it produces righteousness, showing that we must reform our old conversation by asking for mercy. 'For I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy' (Romans 9:15, Exodus 33:19), said the Lord. For so He says, 'Fool, this night shall your soul be required of you; and whose shall those things be which you have prepared?' (Luke 12:20)

Therefore, our Gospel lesson is a call to consider where our treasure is; for where our treasure is, there is where our heart will be also (Luke 12:34). And as we realize that our real treasure is in heaven, good works are a natural, joyful result.

The Transient Nature of This Life

One of the Psalms attributed to Moses states, “The days of our lives *are* seventy years; and if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years, yet their boast *is* only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10). Thus it is with all of humanity; we have a transient existence in this life, and what matters is what we store up for eternity.

Cyprian of Carthage addressed¹⁴⁷ the transient nature of this life using the words of the Lord's Prayer. There is both a spiritual and a literal understanding to the words, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). The spiritual understanding relates to the Eucharist, which is our true food, where we have no life without it (John 6:51-58). The literal understanding relates to those who have renounced the world with its riches and pomp, and who ask for themselves merely food and support. Both understandings stand in utter contrast to the “rich fool”, where Jesus spoke of a man becoming perfect and complete by selling all his goods, not by hoarding them. On the other hand, the Scriptures promise that daily bread cannot be lacking to the righteous man.

“We ask in the Lord's Prayer, 'Give us this day our daily bread'. And this may be understood both spiritually and literally, because either way of understanding it is rich in divine usefulness to our salvation. For Christ is the bread of life; and this bread does not belong to all men, but it is ours. Accordingly we say, 'Our Father', because He is the Father of those who understand and believe; so also we call it 'our bread', because Christ is the bread of those who are in union with His body. We ask that this bread should be given to us daily, that we who are in Christ, and daily receive the Eucharist for the food of salvation, may not, by injecting some heinous sin, be prevented from partaking of the heavenly bread, and be separated from Christ's body. He Himself warns, 'I am the bread of life which came down from heaven. If any man eats of my bread, he shall live forever; and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world' (John 6:51-58). When He says that whoever shall eat of His bread shall live forever, it is clear that those who partake of His body and receive the Eucharist by the right of communion are living. On the other hand, we must fear and pray lest anyone who, being withheld from communion, is separate from

¹⁴⁷ Cyprian of Carthage, Treatises, IV, 18-21.

Christ's body should remain at a distance from salvation. He Himself threatens, 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall have no life in you' (John 6:53). And therefore we ask that our bread — that is, Christ — may be given to us daily, that we who live in Christ may not depart from His sanctification and body."

"Another understanding of, 'Give us this day our daily bread', refers to those who have renounced the world, and have cast away its riches and pomp in the faith of spiritual grace, and who ask simply for food and support. The Lord instructs us, 'Whoever does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple' (Luke 14:33). But he who has begun to be Christ's disciple, renouncing all things according to the word of his Master, ought to ask for his daily food, and not to extend his petition to a long period. The Lord prescribes, 'Take no thought for tomorrow, for tomorrow itself shall take thought for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof' (Matthew 6:34). With reason, then, does Christ's disciple ask food for himself for today, since he is prohibited from thinking of tomorrow. It becomes a contradiction for us to seek to live long in this world, since we ask that the kingdom of God should come quickly. Paul admonishes us, giving substance to the steadfastness of our hope and faith. 'We brought nothing into this world, *and it is certain we can carry nothing out.* And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of evil*, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows'" (1 Timothy 6:7-10).

"He teaches us that riches are not only to be scorned, but that they are also dangerous; that in them is the root of seducing evils, that deceive the blindness of the human mind by a hidden deception. God rebukes the rich fool, who thinks of his earthly wealth, and boasts himself in the abundance of his overflowing harvests, saying, 'You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you; then whose shall those things be which you have provided?' (Luke 12:20) The fool who was to die that night was rejoicing in his stores, and he to whom life already was failing, was thinking of the abundance of his food. But, on the other hand, the Lord tells us that he becomes perfect and complete who sells all his goods, and distributes them for the use of the poor, and so lays up for himself treasure in heaven. He says that that man is able to follow Him, and to imitate the glory of the Lord's passion. Free from hindrance, he is involved in no worldly entanglements, but he accompanies his possessions, which earlier have been sent to God. Every one of us may be able to thus prepare himself, let him thus learn to pray and know, from the character of the prayer, what he ought to be."

"For daily bread cannot be lacking to the righteous man, since it is written, 'The Lord will not slay the soul of the righteous by hunger' (Proverbs 10:3 LXX). And again 'I have been young and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging their bread' (Psalm 37:25). The Lord moreover promises, 'Do not worry saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or how shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the nations seek. And your Father knows that you have need of all these things. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you' (Matthew 6:31-33). To those who seek God's kingdom and righteousness, He promises that all things shall be added (John 6:27, Matthew 6:8). Since all things are God's, nothing will be lacking to him who possesses God, if God Himself is

not lacking to him. Thus a meal was divinely provided for Daniel, when he was shut up in the lions' den. In the midst of wild beasts that were hungry, and yet spared him, the man of God was fed¹⁴⁸. Thus Elijah in his flight was nourished by ravens serving him in his solitude" (1 Kings 17:1-6).

Also using the words of the Lord's Prayer, Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, encouraged¹⁴⁹ his people to enter into the life of the Church, which included the fasts on Wednesday and Friday, and the vigil at Great Vespers on Saturday. Part of the life of the Church includes almsgiving with cheerfulness and showing love for our neighbor in order that death doesn't come upon us unawares and we end up as the rich fool.

"In the Lord's Prayer we say, 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done as in heaven, so also on earth' (Matthew 6:10). For what else do we ask for in these words but that God may subdue those whom He has not yet subdued; and as in heaven He makes the angels servants of His will, so also on earth He may make men? And in seeking this we love God; we love also our neighbor. The love within us has but one Object, since we desire the bond-servant to serve and the Lord to have rule."

"The habit of well-doing strengthens this state of mind, because the conscience needs to be delighted at good deeds, and do willingly what it rejoices to have done. Thus fasts are kept, alms freely given, justice maintained, frequent prayer resorted to, and the desires of individuals become the common wish of all. Labor fosters patience; gentleness extinguishes anger; loving-kindness treads down hatred; unclean desires are slain by holy aspirations; avarice is cast out by liberality; and burdensome wealth becomes the means of virtuous acts. But because the snares of the devil are not at rest even in such a state of things, most rightly at certain seasons of the year the renewal of our vigor is provided for. Now in particular, one who is greedy of present good might boast due to the clemency of the weather and the fertility of the land, and having stored his crops in great barns, might say to his soul, 'you have much goods, eat and drink'. Let him pay attention to the rebuke of the Divine voice, 'You fool, this night they require your soul of you, and the things which you have prepared, whose shall they be?' (Luke 12:19-20) This should be the wise man's most anxious consideration, in order that, as the days of this life are short and its span uncertain, death may never come upon him unawares, and that knowing himself mortal he may meet his end fully prepared. And so, that this may be available both for the sanctification of our bodies and the renewal of our souls, on Wednesday and Friday let us fast, and on Saturday let us keep vigil with the most blessed Apostle Peter, whose prayers will help us to obtain fulfillment of our holy desires through Christ our Lord."

John Chrysostom compared¹⁵⁰ this life to a temporary stay in an inn. When staying in an inn or a hotel, we don't stick around and remodel it; we don't move all our belongings in; we just stay there briefly and leave. Many people get very involved fighting for the things of this life and neglecting heavenly things. When they are called to depart, they are totally unprepared, because they do not have an accurate judgment of all things.

¹⁴⁸ Lancelot C. L. Brenton, The Septuagint with Apocrypha, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA 01961, 1990, p. 138. Bel and the Dragon 1:30-39.

¹⁴⁹ Leo the Great, Sermons, XC, 3-4.

¹⁵⁰ John Chrysostom, Two Homilies on Eutropius, II, 5-6.

“Do you not know that the present life is a brief stay in a far country? You are not a citizen, but you are a traveler, where no one has a city; the city is above. Present life is but a journey every day, while nature is running its course. Some store up goods on the way; some bury jewelry on the road. Now when you enter an inn do you remodel the inn? No, you eat, drink and hurry to leave. The present life is an inn; we have entered it, and we bring present life to a close. Let us be eager to leave with a good hope; let us leave nothing here, that we may not lose it there.

When you enter the inn, what do you say to the clerk? ‘Take care where you put our things’, that you do not leave anything behind, that nothing may be lost, not even what is small and trifling, in order that we may carry everything back to our home. The traveler has an advantage over us. The traveler knows when he is going to the inn, and when he is leaving; for the departure as well as the arrival is in his own power. But when I enter the inn, that is to say, this present life, I don’t know when I will depart. It may be that I am busy providing myself with supplies to last for a long time, when the Master suddenly summons me saying, ‘You fool, for whom shall those things be which you have prepared? This night your soul is being taken from you’ (Luke 12:20 loosely). The time of your departure is uncertain; the tenure of your possessions is insecure; there are many steep cliffs and roaring waves on every side of you. We ought not to desert the reality and run after shadows?”

“I say these things, and shall not cease saying them, causing continual pain, and dressing the wounds; and I say this not for the sake of the fallen, but for those who are still standing. The fallen have departed, and their career has ended, but those who are yet standing have gained a more secure position through the calamities of others. What then shall we do? Do one thing only, hate riches, and love your life; throw away your goods; not all of them, but cut off the excess. Do not be covetous of other men’s goods, don’t plunder the widow and orphan or seize their house. I do not address myself to persons but to facts. But if anyone’s conscience attacks him, he himself is responsible for it, not my words. Why are you grasping where you bring anger upon yourself? Grasp where there is a crown to be gained. Fight to lay hold of heaven not earth! ‘The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force’ (Matthew 11:12). Why do you lay hold of the poor man who criticizes you? Lay hold of Christ who praises you for it. Do you see your senselessness and madness? Do you foreclose on the poor man who has little? Christ says, ‘lay hold of Me; I thank you for it; lay hold of My Kingdom and take it by violence’. If you try to lay hold of an earthly kingdom, you are punished; but in the case of the heavenly kingdom, you are punished if you do not lay hold of it. Where worldly things are concerned there are hard feelings, but where spiritual things are concerned, there is love. Meditate daily on these things, and if two days from now you see another riding in a chariot, arrayed in silk clothing and elated with pride, do not be dismayed and troubled. Do not praise a rich man, but only him who lives in righteousness. Do not revile a poor man, but learn to have an upright and accurate judgment in all things.”

TABLE I
CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOLS VS. THE WISE

<i>THE FOOL</i>	<i>THE WISE</i>	<i>REFERENCE</i>
Toward God		
Denies existence of God	Seeks God	Psalm 14:1,2; 55:1,2
Speaks error against Lord	Fears Lord	Isaiah 32:6, Proverbs 1:7
Sacrifice of Fools	Guards steps	Ecc. 5:1, 4
On Understanding		
Thinks self wise, but hates knowledge, wisdom	Has wisdom	Pr. 1:22, 14:33, 1:7, 17:16 Rom. 1:22
Right in his own eyes	Listens to counsel	Pr. 10:8, 12:15, 18:2, 26:5, 12, 28:26, Ecc. 10:6
Feeds on folly	Seeks knowledge	Pr. 15:14, 16:22
Walks in darkness	Eyes in head	Ecc. 2:14
Behavior		
Arrogant & careless	Turns from evil	Pr. 14:16, Ecc. 7:7
Rejects father's discipline	Regards reproof	Pr 15:5, 17:21, 25
Even blows won't correct	Rebuke goes deep	Pr. 17:10, 19:29, 26:3, 27:22
Quarrelsome	Avoids strife	Pr. 20:3, 27:3
Sport = wickedness	Sport = wisdom	Pr. 7:22, 10:23, Is. 32:6, 7
Always loses temper	Holds his anger	Pr. 29:11, Ecc. 7:9
Companions suffer harm	Companions wise	Pr. 13:20, Ps. 107:17
Control of Tongue		
Speaks slander, deceit	Restrains lips	Pr. 10:18, Ecc. 10:12, Is. 32:7
Mocks sin	Has goodwill	Pr. 14:9
Perverse, hasty in speech	Feeds many with lips	Pr. 10:21, 17:7, 19:1, 29:20
Spouts folly	Builds bridges	Pr. 15:2, Ecc. 10:13

RIGHTEOUS LIVING

December 7, 2014
26th Sunday after Pentecost
Revision E

Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-19

Today's Epistle lesson is used often in the West, either for the 4th Sunday in Lent or the 20th Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-19	311
Background to Ephesians.....	311
The Saints as Light to the World (Ephesians 5:6-14)	312
Redeeming the Time (Ephesians 5:15-17).....	313
Being Filled with the Spirit – Ephesians 5:18-21	314
Giving Thanks for All Things – Ephesians 5:20.....	315
Submitting to One Another – Ephesians 5:21.....	316

Background to Ephesians

Paul wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians from house-arrest in Rome in about 62 AD. He had first met with and reasoned with Jews in the synagogue there in about 52 AD on his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 18:19). Although Paul did not stay there long in 52 AD (Acts 18:20), he left Aquila (of the Seventy) and his wife Priscilla there and promised to return (Acts 18:18-21). About 53 AD, Paul returned on his Third Missionary Journey and spent two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10). At this time, the church took a separate direction distinct from the synagogue. On his return to Jerusalem at the end of his Third Missionary Journey in 57 AD, Paul had a very emotional farewell meeting (Acts 20:37-38) with the elders of the Church (Acts 20:17), knowing he may never return.

Ephesus had had a number of distinguished visitors over the years. The Apostle John and the Virgin Mary had gone there to escape the bloodbath of Herod (Agrippa) trying to please the Jews – which resulted in the martyrdom of James the son of Zebedee and the imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12:1-4). That bloodbath began in 44 AD and ended with the death of Herod soon thereafter (Acts 12:20-23). Apollos (of the Seventy) also was in Ephesus in 53 AD and vigorously refuted the Jews showing from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 18:24-28).

After the death of the Virgin Mary in the mid 50's AD, the Apostle John returned to Ephesus and worked with a number of Churches in that area: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea (Revelation 2, 3). John may have been in the area when Paul wrote his Epistle.

Copyright © Mark Kern 2006

We might note that Paul, in his humility, had been preparing the saints of Asia Minor for the Apostle John between 46 AD and c. 55 AD. When the Apostles in Jerusalem divided up the world after Pentecost and drew lots to see who should go where, John had drawn the lot for Asia Minor. But John was also constrained from going there by the Lord until the death of the Virgin Mary (John 19:25-27).

The Saints as Light to the World (Ephesians 5:6-14)

Paul had just finished encouraging the saints to be imitators of God, offering themselves as an offering for a sweet-smelling aroma (Ephesians 5:1-2). Paul had similarly encouraged the Roman Church to do so (Romans 12:1). On the other hand, the world around them was involved in other uses for their bodies: fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, etc. (Ephesians 5:3-4). Paul reminded them not to be partakers with them (Ephesians 5:7) since

- No one who does these things has any inheritance in the Kingdom of God (Ephesians 5:5).
- Don't let empty words deceive you about this (Ephesians 5:6).
- Because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience (v.6).

The context implies that some of the believers in the Ephesus area were involved with the things mentioned (Ephesians 5:3-5). Paul thus encouraged the saints to walk as children of light since **they now are light in the Lord** (Ephesians 5:8). Christ, the Head of the Body, had come as Light overcoming darkness (John 1:4-9). If the saints are to imitate Him, they need to be light also. In being light, all they need do is exhibit the fruit of the Spirit: good works, righteousness and truth (Ephesians 5:9); this is well pleasing to the Lord (Ephesians 5:10). Part of this is remembering our baptism (Romans 6) and that we were bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23).

One aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, namely truth, involves the responsibility not to ignore the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11), but reprove them. Paul said not to have any fellowship with them, but don't just ignore them either. Speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) was a major factor in the maturity of the Church. Speaking the truth with one's neighbor (Ephesians 4:25, Zechariah 8:16) was supposed to be part of the Old Covenant and is of major importance now that we are members of one another (Ephesians 4:25) in the Body of Christ.

Besides exposing the unfruitful works of darkness, Paul said that, "it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret" (Ephesians 5:12). This admonition extends even to gossip about someone's sin; the gossip-minded person shares in the sin of the unfruitful works of darkness. Even this is shameful, and is not what Paul is encouraging the Ephesians to do.

John Chrysostom points out¹⁵¹ here that Paul said to reprove, not to judge. So long as the wound is concealed in darkness, it is secure; once it is brought to the light, the darkness is cleared away.

"The Lord had said, 'Judge not, that you be not judged' (Matthew 7:1) and He spoke this with reference to very small errors. Indeed, He added, 'why do you

¹⁵¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XVIII, vv. 11-13.

look at the speck in your brother's eye but do not consider the plank in your own eye' (Matthew 7:3). But Paul did not say to judge; he said to reprove. What Paul is saying is that sin is sometimes like a wound; so long as it is imbedded and concealed outwardly, and runs beneath the surface, it receives no attention. So long as it is concealed, being as it were in darkness, it is daringly committed in full security. But as soon as 'it is made clear' (Ephesians 5:13), it becomes light – not indeed the sin itself but the sinner. For when he has been brought out into the light and admonished, and then he has repented, have you not cleared away all darkness? Have you not then healed his world?"

Chrysostom adds¹⁵² that some people fear that they will be hated for convicting a brother of sin. Doing so can represent showing true love to our brother. Even if he is incorrigible, we need to do our duty before God; a man will listen differently to a friend than a chance acquaintance.

“If a man robs someone we justly convict him, but yet we may fear being hated by him. Convict your brother; incur enmity for the love's sake which you owe to Christ and for the love's sake which you owe to your brother. Stop him as he is on his road to the pit of destruction. When we see him lying prostrate in the furnace of wickedness, let us raise him up. 'But', they say, 'it is no use; he is incorrigible.' However, we need to do our duty and then we have excused ourselves to God. It is for this that we have speech, and a mouth and a tongue that we may correct our neighbor. It is the dumb and reasonless creatures only that have no care for their neighbor, and take no account of others.”

“There is no evidence of friendship so true as to never overlook the sins of our brethren. And it is not on our neighbor, but on ourselves that we are conferring the chief benefit. It is for this that we are friends that we may be of use to one another. A man will listen in a different spirit from a friend than from a chance acquaintance.”

In this same vein, Ephesians 5:14 has been called an early baptismal hymn that may have been adapted from parts of Isaiah (Isaiah 26:19, 60:1). The message of the hymn is to awake from the sleep of sin (Romans 13:11-14, 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8) and arise from being dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1) and put on the armor of light (Romans 13:12) and walk in the light (John 12:35, 11:9, 9:4).

Redeeming the Time (Ephesians 5:15-17)

Having awakened out of the sleep of sin, Paul encouraged the saints to walk carefully, not as unwise but as wise and to redeem the time. The term “redeem” and “redemption” had connotations in 1st century Israel that have been largely lost today.

According to Mosaic Law, every firstborn from man or animals was to be redeemed (Exodus 13:11-12). The firstborn of clean animals were offered as a sacrifice (Numbers 8:17). The firstborn of unclean animals (e.g. a donkey) were redeemed with a lamb (Exodus 13:13, 34:20). And the firstborn of man was redeemed with a price: five shekels in silver (Numbers

¹⁵² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XVIII, Moral.

18:16). Initially, the firstborn of every family was designated to serve the Lord as a priest (Exodus 13:2, 11, 12). But when only the Levites responded to Moses' call for repentance at the time of the golden calf (Exodus 32:26), the Levites replaced the firstborn in the Temple service (Numbers 3:12-13).

The principle behind redemption was a buying back; Christ did this for us by buying us back from the penalty of our sin (Hebrews 9:12-15). In the context of Ephesians 5, Paul spoke of the days being evil (Ephesians 5:16) and therefore needing to be redeemed or bought back. Paul used this same expression in his letter to the Colossians, which was written about the same time (Colossians 4:5).

Chrysostom stated¹⁵³ that the time needs to be redeemed from the evils that men do. We are just passing through on our way to the Kingdom of God. By bearing all things, we redeem the time.

“Christ had said, ‘Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof’ (Matthew 6:34). In what sense does He call the time evil? It is not the essence of the day, or the day as so created, but it is the things transacted in them. Now the events which take place in it are good things from God and evil things from bad men. So then of the evils which happen in the day, men are the creators and hence it is that the times are said to be evil.”

“Therefore, the time is not yours. At present, you are strangers, sojourners, foreigners and aliens (cf. Hebrews 11:37-38, Ephesians 2:19); seek not honors, seek not glory, seek not authority or revenge. Bear all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) and in this way ‘redeem the time’ or buy up for yourselves the opportunity”.

So how does one redeem the time? In the latter part of Ephesians, Paul details a number of specifics:

- Worship in the Church (Ephesians 5:18-21)
- Husbands and wives (Ephesians 5:22-33)
- Children and parents (Ephesians 6:1-4)
- Slaves and master (Ephesians 6:5-9)
- Spiritual warfare, weapons and readiness (Ephesians 6:10-20)

The bottom line to all these is walking carefully, not as unwise but as wise (Ephesians 5:15), and understanding what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5:17). This involves not growing weary of doing good (Galatians 6:9) and conducting ourselves throughout the time of our stay here in fear (1 Peter 1:17). We can then use earthly goods and actions to store up treasure in heaven (Luke 18:22, 12:21, 33).

Being Filled with the Spirit – Ephesians 5:18-21

Chrysostom pointed out¹⁵⁴ that wine has been given us by the Lord for cheerfulness and for medicinal purposes. “Give strong drink to him who is perishing and wine to him whose life is bitter” (Proverbs 31:6). “Wine can mitigate bitterness and gloominess and drive away clouds

¹⁵³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 15-17.

¹⁵⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 17-18.

from the brow; thus the Scripture says, ‘Wine makes glad the heart of man’ (Psalm 104:15). Paul also wrote to Timothy, ‘Use a little wine for your stomach and your frequent weaknesses’” (1 Timothy 5:23).

Wine is also good for external medicinal purposes. In treating the man left for dead, the Good Samaritan poured wine and oil on his wounds after applying bandages (Luke 10:34).

But like the covetous, some people are not satisfied with just a little and use God’s gift for drunkenness, rioting and their own self-destruction. Paul contrasts this with being filled with the Spirit. About seven years earlier, he had written to the Romans about how the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

Other ways of redeeming the time and being filled with the Spirit that Paul mentions are:

- Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19).
- Singing and psalming in your heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19).
- Giving thanks always for all things (Ephesians 5:20).
- Submitting to one another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5:21), that is, out of humility (1 Peter 5:5).

Chrysostom stated¹⁵⁵ that we can use spiritual drink and be filled with the Holy Spirit by singing Psalms. We do this with understanding, not just mouthing the words.

“Do you wish to be cheerful; do you wish to employ the day? I give you spiritual drink. For drunkenness even cuts off the articulate sound of our tongue; it makes us lisp and stammer and distorts the eyes and the whole frame altogether. Learn to sing Psalms and you shall see the delightfulness of the employment. For they who sing psalms are filled with the Holy Spirit as they who sing satanic songs are filled with an unclean spirit.” Chrysostom adds that “singing and psalming in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19) refers to doing so with close attention and understanding, and not just mouthing the words while our heart is roaming elsewhere.”

“And is then this Spirit within us? Yes, indeed, within us! When we have driven away lying, bitterness, fornication, uncleanness and covetousness from our souls, when we have become kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, when there is no coarse jesting, when we have rendered ourselves worthy of it, what is there to hinder the Holy Spirit from coming and lighting upon us? Not only will He come unto us, but He will fill our hearts; and when we have so great a light kindled within us, then will the way of virtue be no longer difficult to attain, but will be easy and simple”.

Giving Thanks for All Things – Ephesians 5:20

Another aspect of being filled with the Spirit is thankfulness. The Greek word meaning to give thanks (*eucharisteo*) has been transliterated into English as the word Eucharist referring

¹⁵⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 18-21.

to the Lord's Supper. When the Lord first instituted the Lord's Supper, He used the same terms: giving thanks (*eucharisteo*) over it and blessing it (Matthew 26:26-39, Mark 14:22-26, Luke 22:15-20). Following the Lord's Supper, Jesus and the Twelve sang a hymn before leaving for Gethsemane (Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26). This hymn was probably part of the liturgy that was sung after the Passover meal.

But Paul said to give thanks for all things, not just those that we consider blessings. Remembering the story of Job, there were things going on that Job had no knowledge of. The Lord had pointed out Job's righteousness to Satan; but Satan had challenged the Lord's judgment (Job 1:8-11, 2:3-5). Satan was allowed to afflict Job with every evil imaginable such that Job was destitute and in great pain (Job 1:13-19, 2:7-13). Yet Job's words were "Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

John Chrysostom stated¹⁵⁶, "If you give thanks when you are in comfort and in affluence, in success and in prosperity, there is nothing great, nothing wonderful in that. Compare this to a man giving thanks when he is in afflictions, in anguish, in discouragement". As an example, one might recall Paul and Silas, broken and bleeding and sitting in a Philippian jail, but praying and singing hymns to God – at midnight (Acts 16:23-25).

Chrysostom encourages¹⁵⁷ us to give thanks even for hell itself and for the things that we don't want. Hell can be good as a bridle on our hearts; some things we receive keep us from sin.

"Surely it is a thing beneficial to those who attend to it, when the dread of hell is laid like a bridle on our hearts. Let us therefore give thanks not only for blessings which we see, but also for those which we don't see and for those which we receive against our will. Many are the blessings He bestows upon us without our desire, without our knowledge". In this regard, we need to remember how the story of Job ended. Job benefited greatly from his affliction both in this world and in the age to come (Job 42:10-17, James 5:10:11).

Chrysostom also encourages¹⁵⁸ us to increase our thanksgiving whenever poverty, sickness or disasters affect us.

"Let us increase our thanksgiving when evil comes our way; thanksgiving, I mean, not in words nor in tongue, but in deeds and in works, in mind and in heart". Chrysostom reminded us of the words of our Lord and of the Prophet Isaiah: "What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him" (Matthew 7:9, 11). "Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget you but I will not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15).

Submitting to One Another – Ephesians 5:21

¹⁵⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 18-21.

¹⁵⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 18-21.

¹⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 18-21.

Paul's statement, "submitting to one another in the fear of God" belongs Ephesians 5:20 as a fourth part of the definition of being filled with the Spirit. [The other three are (1) speaking to one another in Psalms; (2) singing in your heart and (3) giving thanks always]. To illustrate this, the Lord had taken a young child in His arms. (According to tradition the child was Ignatius of Antioch, later the 3rd Bishop of Antioch). "Whoever receives one of these little children in My Name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me." The point was that "if anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant (literally deacon: Greek *diakonos*) of all" (Mark 9:35, 37). The above statements Jesus made following a dispute between the Twelve over who would be the greatest.

A little later, James and John (along with their mother Salome – Matthew 20:20) asked Jesus to grant that they might sit on His right and left in His Glory. This caused another dispute among the Twelve, to which Jesus replied: "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant (Greek: *diakonos*). And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served (*diakoneo*) but to serve (*diakoneo*) and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45). Thus submitting to one another is not a new teaching that Paul came up with, but is just part of basic humility.

Chrysostom pointed out¹⁵⁹ that mutual submission – all waiting upon one another – makes for a much happier, more pleasant life than a forced domination by one individual including fear and apprehension. What then if someone does not choose to submit to us?

"Continue to submit to him, not simply yielding, but really submitting. Entertain this feeling towards all, as if all were your masters. For you will soon have all as your slaves. This is 'subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ' in order that we may subdue all the passions, be servants of God and preserve the love we owe to one another".

¹⁵⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, vv. 18-21.