

Adult Catechism October 17, 2016

My Family Home: A Place to Encounter the Living Christ

Serving Unity

Scripture Verses:

Philippians 2:2: Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

1 Peter 3:8: Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Colossians 3:14: And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Ephesians 4:1-6: I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ...

Philippians 1:27: Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

Introduction: Strong, faith-filled families are the foundation of our parishes, our Church and society. The Eparchy of Saskatoon is committed to helping parents and grandparents pass on the faith to our children and youth. This is a lifelong process. It is a great responsibility, but an even greater joy.

High hopes for our kids...To find peace ... We all have high hopes for our kids, as we want the very best for them. All around us there is division—there are wars among nations and peoples; there is division within the Church; and everywhere we look marriages and families are breaking apart. This is the source of great pain and turbulence in our world. We want the best for our kids, and we pray that they will be able to remain in unity and peace. If they marry, we pray that their marriage will be a lifelong union of love. That in turn, they will be able to be a unifying force in their homes, our church and our world. Heavenly King, Come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all that would defile (divide) us.

Unity is part of our faith tradition Patriarch Sviatoslav reminds us that in the early Church there was a profound sense of unity, such that they were "...of one heart

and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.” (Acts 4:22) This is a very different approach to life than our culture of stark individualism and unrestricted freedom would have us embrace. Yet we long for unity, and are starved for the community that supports it. Help us conform ourselves to Your Image O Holy Trinity of complete unity in diversity, “that all may be one.” (John 17:21)

We are One In Christ (Taken from Archeparchy of Winnipeg Website): “By this will they know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Every Christian community, be it an eparchy, a parish, a family, is a community of love that bears witness to God’s loving presence in the world, so that others might believe and experience his love and be in communion with Him. Prior to his passion Jesus prayed for this communion of love. “Father . . . I pray that all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you; I pray that they may be one with us, that the world may believe you sent me.” (Jn 17:21) By virtue of our baptism all of us have the responsibility of praying and striving for communion in Christ. One of the dominant and intensively discussed themes at the Second Vatican Council was, “Reconciliation and Union of all Christians.” But it is difficult to look forward to the union of all Christians, when divisions exist in our own eparchies, parishes, and families, which means that we must begin at home, with ourselves. In his Encyclical, “Evangelization in the Modern World,” Pope Paul VI, refers to the family as a domestic church. Like the local church, so too the family is the environment in which we first hear the Good News, and become witnesses of God’s loving presence. In other words our Christian - spiritual formation begins in the family.

During the rite of baptism the priest gives a lighted candle to the newly baptized person and says “Take this lighted candle, and strive throughout your entire lifetime to shine brightly with the light of faith and of good works, so that when the Lord comes you can, together with all the wise and holy ones, go forth to meet Him and enter unhindered into the hall of his heavenly glory, and dwell with him forever.” St. Augustine said: “It is Christ alone who baptizes, confirms, forgives, and heals. And Jesus is the center of the mystical life. We are sons and daughters of Abba only in Christ Jesus; we inherit the Kingdom only in Christ Jesus. Christian mysticism is essentially a personal relationship in which one member is a human being and the other is the eternal God revealed in Jesus.” A Christian community is one whose members live out of the center, which is Jesus, who is the center of the Good News; who is the Good News. Consequently the Christian community is one that strives to become like Jesus, and does the works of Christ; the works of compassion, forgiveness, sacrificial love.

But as members of a Christian community we also know that without Christ we do nothing; which means that we are a community that essentially prays. Not only privately, but also together, at the Divine Liturgy, which is the central act of Catholic worship, where we come to adore Jesus Christ our King and our God; where we listen attentively to the Living Word of God, and profess our love for one another, that with one mind and one heart we may profess the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and undivided Trinity. It is here, at the Eucharistic Celebration, the Sacrament of Love, in an atmosphere of prayer, that we become one with Christ and with each other. It is here at the Eucharist that we are nourished with the Bread of Life that gives us strength, the love of Christ that transforms us into his likeness and allows us to love as he loves, unconditionally, without judgment or condemnation, accepting everyone and forgiving everyone. This is the love that gives us the strength to remain faithful to Jesus. It is at the Eucharist that we celebrate our commitment to Christ, and to each other and to work tirelessly at love and compassion. It is for this reason that Jesus tells us to celebrate the Eucharist in his memory, in memory of his tremendous love, and to remember that he is always with us.

In one of his letters to the Christians in Corinth St. Paul writes: "Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be brave and strong." Do all your work in love. (1 Cor 16:13). In other words Paul was reminding the newborn Christians in Corinth to be faithful to their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It hadn't been that long since they had turned their life over to Jesus and promised to be faithful to him. But now it seems as though they were running into difficulties and having serious problems, and just really having a rough time remaining faithful to their commitment to Jesus.

We would do well to take Paul's words seriously, and examine carefully our own commitment to Jesus, and see how faithful we are to Jesus and to his way of life. Because we live under similar pressures as did the Christians in Paul's time; so much so, that if we really believe in Christ and live according to his teaching, we too, can expect being looked upon as fanatics, fools, and ridiculed. Jesus has chosen us out of the world, we have responded to his call to live our lives differently, radically differently. We have renounced Satan, and the ways of a sinful world. We have united ourselves with Christ, and believe in him. If we, as a Christian community, persevere in our commitment to Christ, and remain faithful to him, we too, can expect to be hated, persecuted, and ridiculed by the world, just as Jesus was; because Jesus' way is diametrically opposed to the way of the world. Jesus says: Happy are the poor and humble in spirit. The world says: Happy are the proud and arrogant. Jesus says: Forgive your brothers and sisters. The world says: No! Get even! Don't let them get away with

it! Jesus says: Be fair and just, share your goods and possessions with others. The world says: Don't be stupid. Give away only what you can't use, and even then be careful. Jesus says: Gather up treasures in Heaven. The world says: Stop dreaming; get all you can out of this life. So we really do need to take the words of Paul seriously, to be alert, to wake up and realize who we really are, to whom we have committed our lives, and to resolve to stand firm and be strong in our faith, to fix our eyes on Jesus, and to live our lives out of his tremendous love that is in our hearts. Because without Jesus we can do nothing.

The Pharisees, in the time of Jesus, were staunch defenders of their faith, and the traditions of their people. But, when Jesus appeared in their midst, they rejected him. They said: "We have a law, and according to this law he must die." We, too, reject Jesus when focusing our attention on the externals of our Faith: our rituals, customs and traditions, we neglect the one thing necessary – LOVE. The evangelist John states: "He who says he loves God, whom he cannot see, but hates, or simply neglects his brother whom he does see, is a liar." One who has no love for the brother he has seen, cannot love the God he has not seen. (1 Jn 20:21) Therefore, the Christian community is one where compassion, forgiveness, and unconditional love are clearly evident. It is a place where everyone is welcome and can feel at home; especially the poor, the weak, wounded, handicapped, and heavily burdened; those who feel lost, forgotten, those for whom life has no meaning. The Christian community is one that is mindful of the Divine Presence, is in touch with God and neighbor, follows Jesus on his path of love, and gives clear witness to the presence of Jesus in our midst, so that others may believe.

Why is Christian Unity so Important? Written by Charles Stanley Paul wrote [1 Corinthians 1:10–17] a letter to the divided body of Corinthian believers. The church was allowing a disagreement to hinder their fellowship. Paul knew the steep danger of dissension among believers. Scripture is clear about the church's mission. Some of its highest goals include sharing the gospel with all nations, caring for those in need, and worshiping together, along with loving, encouraging, and admonishing one another in God's truth. None of these is fully possible if a church is divided, whether physically or mentally.

God wants His people to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). So if all Christians base their beliefs on the Bible, they should be able to settle every argument according to its truth, right? Unfortunately, it is not that simple. Our human nature, preferences, and different interpretations of Scripture can cause disagreements. Consider, for example, how many churches have experienced strife over music styles.

Tragically, when differences are divisive, our mission becomes blurred and we are ineffective. Just as fishermen cannot catch fish with a broken net, we are unable to effectively share Jesus with the world when our fellowship is not intact....

Are your actions and words strengthening your fellow Christians? Or do you gossip, express negativity, and push your own preferences and opinions? Be careful. God has mandated that our conduct positively impact the church's unity. This is essential if we are to accomplish His purpose.

Unity and Family Faith Formation: Every step in our journey in faith brings us closer to Christ—even small changes can make a big difference. Begin your plan to build your 'domestic church with this self-assessment:

1. We seek peace and harmony in our relationships and try to resolve differences with respect, always mindful of the "common" good.

a. never b. rarely c. sometimes d. frequently

2. We remember the daily need for forgiveness. We seek the sacrament of reconciliation regularly and faith-filled counsel and support when required.

a. never b. rarely c. sometimes d. frequently

3. We cultivate a positive attitude towards others, within and outside our family. With a sense of humor and a spirit of prayer we try to resolve our differences.

a. never b. rarely c. sometimes d. frequently

4. We are secure in our faith tradition and can reach out to others based on unity in Christ and model charity and respect for non-Christians.

a. never b. rarely c. sometimes d. frequently