

Healing Divisions (1 Corinthians 3:1-9)

St. Paul spent a year and half in Corinth. He was well aware the city was quite wealthy but had a number of temples dedicated to the Greek and Roman gods. Unfortunately, not long after leaving the city, Paul began hearing reports that things were not going well.

The church in Corinth was plagued by all sorts of problems. In the letter, Paul addresses five of them. He typically describes the problem and then responds to the problem with the gospel. In other words, Paul looks at every area of life – relationships, family life, community, and work in light of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Today, we hear the tail end of the first of the five problems that Paul addresses, i.e., the problem of divisions (chapters 1 – 4). After Paul left, new teachers came into town. The Corinthian Christians formed groupies around their favorite teacher and in doing so, began disrespecting or bad mouthing those who favored another teacher. The clique culture in the Corinthian church reminds me of my high school days when we had the jocks, nerds, preppies, alternatives, and the stoners.

How does Paul respond? The Church is not a popularity contest! Instead, it is a community of baptized believers centered around Jesus Christ. In today's reading, Paul reminds them about Jesus, who suffered on the cross for them. They think they're so smart by following this teacher or that one, but all these teachers are at the service of the cross. In short, Paul reminds the Corinthians, "We are all here to serve Christ, who is the center and the goal of your community."

We can say the same thing today for every Catholic parish. The center and the goal of every Catholic parish is to serve Christ, who suffered and died for us. The goal is to facilitate communion with Him. When a parish loses sight of this, it will become divided.

We are all very familiar with the divisions in our country, which have become deeper and more heated. While disheartening, what a great opportunity to be a light for Christ, to be united in Him! As we work through this letter, my hope is that you will ask Jesus, or better, beg Him, "How can I be a person of communion, a person of unity? How can I bring people together?"

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be become children of God, our Lord reminds us (Matt. 5:9). Indeed, blessed are those who find ways to build unity in Christ.

~St. Thérèse, pray for us!