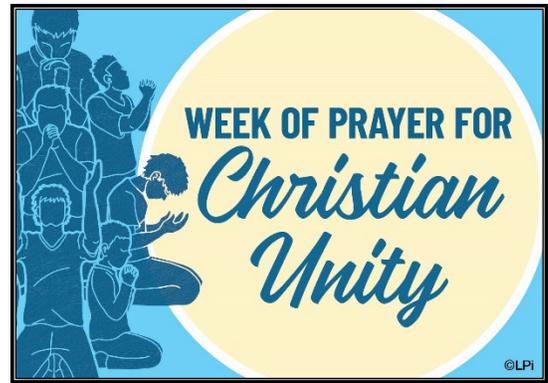


Dear Friends,

Is Christ divided? In today's second reading, St. Paul is agonized because the Christians in Corinth wrongly directed their loyalty to different ministers who established their Christian communities instead of proclaiming their loyalty to the one Lord in whom all Christians believe. They ended up with the different claims we find in the second reading: ***"I belong to Paul," "I belong to Apollos," "I belong to Cephas," "I belong to Christ"*** (1 Corinthians 1:12). The Corinthians forgot the words of Paul, ***"For we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus."*** (2 Cor 4:5)



Human nature has changed little through all the centuries. Looking at today's second reading, I am surprised to see that the first generation of Christians started from divisions in the church of Corinth. Three years had passed since they dedicated their lives to Christ. When they were baptized, their desire was to follow Christ on the road to heaven. Now, after just three years, personal pride was overtaking them. Some were looking down on others because it was the great Paul who taught and converted them. Others claimed a greater superiority because they had a more powerful teacher, Apollos of Alexandria. Still others began to despise both of these parties because they were instructed by the head of the Apostles, the Rock, Peter. How silly it may seem to us! What does it matter who taught them, if they have learned the truth about Christ and God's great love?

To St. Paul, all those divisions were not silly, but very dangerous, because it showed that human pride - the first sin of human nature - was taking roots among the church in Corinth. This story of how the one Christian church of Corinth ended up in division and polarization can tell us a lot about how the one universal church founded by Jesus Christ became thousands of different denominations we have today. And the sad part is that many work against each other. It is easy to look at them and be surprised how divided Corinthians were, but it is hard to look at ourselves and see how Christians are divided in our town, between Christians of different denominations as well as between Catholics.

In his letter, St. Paul reminded Corinth who their true master and teacher was – Jesus Christ. Let us take to our hearts Paul's reminder that it was Christ who died for us all and that Christ is not and must not be divided. I deeply believe that only when all Christian ministers and leaders (including me) have the spirituality and humility of Paul to direct their members to Christ rather than to themselves, the unity of Christians is possible! The first step to unity among all Christians is unity among Catholics. If we are not united, how can we expect all Christians to be united?

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity started January 18 and finishes on the 25th. This week was chosen as Christian Unity Week because it celebrates the feasts of St Peter's Chair in Rome (January 22) and the of the Conversion of St Paul (January 25). As we celebrate these two pillars of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, let us resolve, as individuals and as a community, to work to heal the wounds of division among Christians, starting with ourselves as Catholics, for a house divided against itself cannot stand.

Peace,

Father Krzysztof