

## Unity and Reconciliation

It goes without saying that we live in a divided world. There is something about human nature that makes us believe that we are right and others are wrong, that others have something that we want. That is human selfishness, what we as Christians call sin. Which is why working for peace and reconciliation is such a necessary and endless task in our world today.

But we have to acknowledge that the Church also is divided. Christians have had divisions since the earliest times, as the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of St Paul testify. For we are all human. And yet as the prayer of Jesus in our reading just now reminds us, that is not God's will for humanity or for his Church. We are to be as one, as Jesus and his Father are one. And what underpins that oneness, that unity, is love: the love of God for us and the love which we are to have for one another.

Of course there has been much progress on the road to Christian unity, especially in the last seventy years or so. But there is still a long way to go. We will never achieve agreement on everything, and indeed uniformity is not the desired goal. Rather we as Christians need to affirm what we hold in common: the love for our Lord – the love that Jesus showed in his incarnation, teaching, death and resurrection – the love that we can continue to experience through God's Holy Spirit.

At the same time we should value our diversity. There are many ways in which we can worship and grow closer to God. Which is why the Christian tradition is so rich and varied. God is so great, so much beyond our limited human understanding, that we need all the resources we can to deepen our spiritual journey.

I have recently returned from a pilgrimage to Greece in the steps of St Paul. It was inspiring to be in places where Paul preached and worked for the gospel – places where even he experienced problems and divisions in the Christian communities he sought to nourish. We were privileged to experience something of the Orthodox tradition today. And at the end of June some of us will be returning to Lübeck where we will renew our link with the Lutheran congregation of St Mary's Church there.

Yesterday was the feast of Corpus Christi when we give thanks for the Eucharist. In the Eucharist we are united with God and with one another. And yet it also reminds us of our divisions. As Anglicans we are able to share Communion in Lutheran churches but not officially in the churches of our Roman Catholic and Orthodox brothers and sisters in Christ. And that is a cause for great sorrow. And so we pray for peace and reconciliation in the Church that our divisions may continue to be broken down and that we might be better able to witness to the kingdom of God in unity and love.

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