We are the Body of Christ

Christ is the "head of the church." Out of his love for the church, he gave his own life for her. So the church must submit to Christ in everything. She must follow Christ’s command and do only what Christ would do and speak what Christ would speak.

The church has a very intimate relationship with Christ.

It is "his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:23).

In other words, Christ shines forth his wisdom, power, and glory through the church. Despite the variety of jobs and functions, we belong to one body. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body,

so it is with Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12).

The spirit of unity and mutual support is the guiding principle of the church. As members of this family, we need to work together using our God-given abilities to help each other grow. Having the love and grace of our Lord as our common bond, we can always have joy, peace, and strength in Christ.

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What is the role of the church members?

Like a family, the church provides for the spiritual needs of her members. The Holy Spirit distributes various gifts and abilities to the members so that they may serve and encourage one another (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

As members of the family, we need to work together using our God-given abilities to help each other grow. The spirit of unity and mutual support is the guiding principle of the church. Having the love and grace of the Lord as our common bond, we share together the joy, peace, and strength in Christ.

Jesus’ Parting Prayer

When a person is about to leave his dear ones, his parting words are usually considered to be the most important.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He commanded His disciples saying, ”Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation; and make disciples of all nations” (Mk 16:15; Mt 28:19). He especially told Peter, ”Tend my sheep” (Jn 21:16). The disciples remembered Jesus’ words. It was through their evangelism and shepherding the believers that the Christian Church still exists today.

Besides the two final commandments, Jesus made a last departing prayer before His captivity. From this prayer, we can see that Jesus specially prayed to the Heavenly Father for the disciples regarding two matters: Sanctification by the truth and Oneness. Therefore, these were the two matters that the disciples had to remember and pray about daily to thank Him. The following describes the importance of the two matters:

I. Sanctification by the truth

Lord Jesus prayed to the Heavenly Father, ”Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. ....And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in the truth” (Jn 17:17-19).

Jesus was praying to the Heavenly Father for the sanctification of each disciple by the truth. For without the holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14; Mt 5:8). God says, ”Therefore come out from them, and be separated from them, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters” (2 Cor 6:17-18).

Because man sinned, he was sent out of the Garden of Eden. Today, the blood of Jesus Christ can wash away our sins, bringing us back to the Father-son relationship we originally had with God; we also receive the Holy Spirit as a seal, a guarantee to the inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom; also, the Holy Spirit renews us daily. Water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are prerequisites for entering the Heavenly Kingdom (Jn 3:5). But God also gives us the truth (the Bible) for our sanctification; hoping that through the truth, we may be sanctified (Eph 5:26) (The Lord gives us several kinds of ‘baptisms’ for our sanctification.)
"Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path; great peace have those who love thy law; nothing can make stumble" (Ps 119:105, 165). Paul also said, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2Tim 3:16-17); "For the work of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joint and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). These explain why the words of God can sanctify us by washing away our sins.

Therefore, the word of the Lord is like spiritual milk. We must love His word, keeping it abundantly in our hearts and meditating on it day and night, that it became our spiritual food for our spiritual growth. It will be our spiritual weapon to fight against the evil. Paul teaches us to fight against Satan, saying, "Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph 6:14-17). This is exemplified by Jesus who overcame Satan’s temptation through the Word of God (Mt 4:1-11). "Every word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him" (Prov 30:5). Therefore, we must build ourselves up on our most holy faith daily; pray in the Holy Spirit", that we be sanctified.

II. Oneness

Jesus prayed to the Heavenly Father, saying, "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one... The glory which thou has sent me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one" (Jn 17:20).
This was the prayer that Jesus made for the unity of the entire church. In a few sentences, He had used the word it oneness” several times, an indication of the fervency of His prayer for the members. The prosperity of the Apostolic Church was a result of the prayer in unity of the believers (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 5:12; 8:6). Jesus says, "If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" (Mt 18:19).

Paul encourages us saying, "With all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:2-3). He also says, "Complete my joy by being in the same mind, having the same love, being full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ" (Phil 2:2-5). This is how we can be in unity. If all of us can "have a heart like Jesus", how can we not have the concept of "oneness"?

Jesus says that He not only prays for His disciples, but also prays for those who, through the words of the disciples, believe in God, so that they may be united (Jn 17:20). As we can see, the greater the number of believers, the harder it is to be united. More people bring forth more opinions, thus it is more difficult for the members to be in unity. Jesus knew that oneness amongst the believers was not easy to achieve because of the dissension resulting from the struggle for power. Moreover, as the number of members increases, so do divided matters. The Church history provides an evidence of this. Hence, Jesus not only prayed for the disciples, He also prayed for those who, through the words of the disciples, believed in God.

We must be sanctified through the truth if we want to be saved; for the sake of the development of the Church, we must have a heart of oneness. Our Lord Jesus hopes that the disciples would follow these two commandments. If we want to be true disciples of Jesus, should not we obey these two matters that He requested?

The chosen ones of God by grace, the ones He calls His own. We come to Him with humble hearts, to Him we all belong.

Spiritual rain, O fall! Spiritual wind, O blow! Nurture the garden of God, and make His blessings grow. (Hymn 126)