

Community

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R.C.I.A. chpt. #3

MYSTICAL BODY

Family / People / Together / Common Bond

“And know that I am with you till the close of the ages”. [Mat.28: 20] Christ then lives on in His Church. The Church was founded by Jesus when He said to Peter: “Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build **MY** Church.” The body He chose to live in, for future generations, is His Church. It is His Church that He commissioned to spread the Good News and to show the way to salvation. Christ then lives in His Church and He lives in the people of the Church. It was Jesus’ prayer: “Father, thou art in me and I in you and that I may be in them so they can be perfectly made one.” The indication here is that Jesus prayed that we would accept His way, His truth, His life. As Jesus lives in His Church we also may live in Him. “If you love Me, keep my commandments.” We might say if you are to live keep His commandments. It also implies that if you do not keep His commandments you do not live!

So Jesus lives on in His Church and we are a part of that Church because of our love for His truth. When we do this Christ lives in us, this becomes the heart of the truth about His Church. The Church and its people have a unity with Christ, and have a living unity with one another. This is what we call the MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST; the faithful followers living in Christ and sharing in eternal life. We do not become eternal life but share in eternal life; we become part of eternal life. A symbol of this may be like taking a drink of water. We do not become water but have life because water supports life. We drink water and water becomes part of us, not us becoming part of water. What we share with one another is the water. The water is our common bond. In this example water is symbolic of God’s grace and life.

In the same way, if we drink poison water, we die; if we drink pure water we live. Some of us may well get use to drinking muddy water and think that is the way it’s supposed to be. When we see pure, clear water we may be dismayed at the unfamiliar sight. It is not until we drink that we find the true satisfaction, understanding and thirst-quenching value of purity and perfection. This is Gods’ grace; this is living in Christ. It is when others share this experience that we have a common bond; a community

founded upon Christ, a **mystical bonding**, a **mystical body** that lives in Christ that is Christ. The imagery that St. Paul used to present this living experience and concept of community was to refer to the living body of a human. St. Paul said: "That I live in the cells of my body because it is by my life that they live in me; because it is from me that life comes to them." If we are to live in Christ, then Christ must live in us.

Baptism is the entry into this **mystical body**, this mystical community. Baptism is not just merely entry into a church; it is entry into supernatural life. It is rebirth into Christ Himself. In baptism we die into Christ, so that we may rise with Him. Put another way, we must conquer ourselves and our human weaknesses; we must decrease in ourselves so that Christ may increase in us. When Christ grows in us, then sanctifying grace grows in us. Christ must grow in us so that we may rise with Him into the glory of God's life. In baptism we are remade; our former nature must be crucified with Christ so our guilts may be annihilated as Jesus annihilated the sins of mankind on the cross. In that way we may rise and live in Him at His resurrection. In other words our life pattern must follow His if He is to live in us.

Again we may see this another way; it is a real suffering to self to conquer self. As we suffer to conquer self for Christ's sake, we meld our suffering to His suffering. We then share in His suffering. When one part of the body suffers, all parts share in the suffering and suffer the consequences. Jesus said: "I am the way". If suffering for His sake was the way, it must then become the way of the Church, it must become our way. We must suffer not for the sake of suffering to put ourselves first but to suffer to put ourselves last. To be at the service of the other members of the body [community] is to meld into Christ. We cannot belong to Christ unless we have the spirit of Christ in us. Christ and spirit are one.

The **Mystical** body must relive the life of Christ to produce actions like His to stir the reaction He stirred. Did not Jesus teach: "by their fruits you shall know them"? The mystical body [the Church] is most bitterly hated not for what is human in it but for what is Christ-like in it. The world may derive some satisfaction pointing out what are the human faults of the Church, but the world cannot tolerate the divine truth, the divine law which is the action of the Church, the action of Christ if He is to live in His Church.

Whatever could be done by God for redeeming mankind has been

done; but there is a lack. There is something that could not be done by God for man; something that man must do for himself. Man's part in redemption is acceptance and repentance. As Christ's giving of self was total so must our acceptance be, so must our repentance be, so must our conquering of self be. Christ provides, Christ gives, so must we accept and we must change. This is the pathway that community must support so that the mystical body of Christ can inspire truth in all of us individually and collectively.

I have mentioned the point of dying to oneself. The perfect human role model of this life style is the life of Mary, His mother. Her humility, harmony and suffering are the perfect role model of the mystical body. Mary and Joseph together are the perfect role models for humanity's holiness.