

In the name of ✠ Jesus. Amen.

Our Indiana primary is over, and it was a more exciting primary than usual. Indiana's primary was actually significant in determining the Democratic and Republican nominees for President. Donald Trump won in Indiana, and thereby became the Republican's "presumptive nominee." And although Hillary Clinton didn't win the state, she gained enough delegates also to be called the "presumptive nominee" for the Democrats.

Almost immediately after the elections, people began to call for unity. We must put aside our differences and unify behind our candidate. Our candidate will make a strong showing if we are unified. Strength doesn't come from our differences, you see, but unity, just as I don't believe, contrary to the popular saying today, that the strength of our country is in its diversity, but in its unity. Thus the old motto, *E Pluribus Unum*: out of many, one. Yet, that is being sorely tested today.

Today we hear Jesus pray what is called His High Priestly Prayer, and in it, we hear a lot about unity. We hear Him pray for unity, and not just unity among his closest disciples, but for all who believe in Him because of the testimony of His disciples. Jesus prays "*for those who believe in [Him] ... that they may all be one.*" That reminds me of what Pastor Trouten recited to me on Thursday as our two churches gathered together to worship the Ascended Christ: "*Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity!*"

Good indeed, but wherein does true unity exist? It's surely not an ethnic unity. From the church's beginning there were people from all over the Roman empire: "*Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt,*" etc. It's not a unity based on sex, or age, or economic status. And when we get to heaven, I hope you won't be surprised to find that there will be saints there "*from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.*"

We hear of the diversity, to be sure, but the point is not really the diversity, but the unity. It's the oneness of the great multitude that no one could number gathered around the Lamb. It's the oneness that we have being in Christ Jesus, having been baptized into Him, having put Him on, that is, clothed with Him, covering over the differences, so that there is neither Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. It's the oneness of having been buried with Him by baptism into His death, that having been united Him in a death like His we might look forward to being united with Him in a resurrection like His. It's the oneness of having been baptized into one body, Christ's body, and made to drink of one Spirit.

There are differences, yes, for the body is made up of different parts, but it is one body, Christ's body, and the parts all work together for the good of the one body. Everyone is important! Everyone is needed—pulling together in unity for the work of Christ's kingdom.

It is true that when we look at each other, we too often see our differences, external differences. That's why, I'm sad to say, that Sunday mornings are still the most segregated time in America as it was back in the 1960s when Martin Luther King, Jr. made that observation. And that is the result of another oneness we have: a oneness in Adam, in the sin that we have inherited from him and in the penalty for that sin and our own — death. In Adam all die, for all have sinned. But that's not the kind of oneness that Jesus is praying for in the Gospel lesson.

Rather He prays for the kind of unity that is ours in Christ Jesus: a unity that is in Him and in the Father and in the Holy Spirit—in the Holy Trinity. Jesus prays, “*that they may all be ONE, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be IN US.*” One in the Father and the Son; one in the Holy Trinity.

But how does this unity come? It comes as gift through the glory of Jesus. Jesus says, “*The glory that you have given me I HAVE GIVEN TO THEM, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one.*”

Now the glory of the invisible God was lost upon man when man sinned. But that glory was restored by the “*God with us*” Son, Jesus, who being one with the Father—the only-begotten of the Father—became one with us, becoming flesh and dwelling among us. Therein is God's glory with mankind again. “*Glory to God,*” the angels sang as the Bethlehem babe was lying in a manger. And just as the incarnation was a manifestation of Jesus' glory, so also His cross and death were the Divinely ordained means for His glory. He came for this purpose. Jesus glorified the Father by accomplishing the work given Him: justifying this world, casting out the ruler of this world, being “*lifted up from the earth,*” dying to give life to the world.

By this same glory of the Father was Jesus raised back to life again—*Christ is risen. Alleluia! He is risen, indeed. Alleluia! Alleluia!*— and by this same glory we are raised again to a new life in Jesus, and we are given Jesus' glory that we may all be one, Him in us, and we in the Holy Trinity. This unity comes only by the incarnate, crucified, risen Jesus.

And this same Jesus, who wrought this oneness FOR US, comes to us personally, in the blessed waters of Holy Baptism as you heard earlier. This is how disciples are made. This is how unity is accomplished IN US: baptism “*in the name*

*of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” In baptism you are given the gift of the Holy Spirit who in faith makes you one with God.

Moreover, this oneness—being one in Jesus, one in the Holy Trinity—yields another kind of unity, a unity with each other, even other Christians, although it is not always manifest. Nor does unity come about by our doing or by our striving, but by God’s grace in Jesus. Be gone with the accusation that Lutherans teach that we are the only ones that will be in heaven. We’ve never taught that as far as I can tell. The reality is that all who are baptized and believe in Jesus as their savior are ONE in Jesus. Jesus has made it so, for *“there is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all,”* and we dare not say anything different.

On the other hand, while we acknowledge that even as all Christians are one in Jesus and the Holy Trinity, we also must acknowledge that Christians externally, because of false teaching or confession, separate themselves from those who teach rightly. Therefore, we must also heed Jesus’ word when He tells us to watch out for false teachers who *“come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”* And St. Paul, too, when he says, *“I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.”*

Both are true—as hard as that is sometimes to grasp. We are one in Jesus now, in the reality of our baptisms; and yet that oneness is not apparent among Christians, and it manifests itself in confessions separating one from another. That means, we don’t just ignore the differences and be “reconciled” in our “diversity” for the sake of an external unity. We can’t do that unless truth is unimportant, and we know Jesus says otherwise, for knowing the truth sets you free.

It’s why we practice closed communion. Holy Communion is, in fact, a meal of oneness, not just in Jesus, but in confession, in Jesus’ word of truth. This meal is meant for those who openly and externally are one with us in THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS: unity in the faith, not necessarily in family, or ethnicity, or language, or nationality, not necessarily in wealth or power or prestige, not necessarily in artistic tastes or interests, but unity in the apostle’s doctrine. One in the confession of the Father who sent the Son; one in the confession of Jesus, the Son, who is one with the Father and with us and thereby makes us one with the Holy Trinity; one in the confession of the Holy Spirit who brings us the apostolic word in water and supper and preaching, and gives us *“the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

Christian unity. Jesus prays for it, and it's ours now in the Holy Trinity, and yet in this world it's not fully realized—certainly not in our politics, but not externally in the church either. May we continue to pray for the church that all who believe and are baptized may be preserved in Jesus unto the end, and may we also work diligently toward true external unity, a unity of confession, that we may all be PERFECTLY one as the Father and the Son are one.

In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.