



VATICAN - AVE MARIA : Mother of Unity

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Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many...But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you." Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honourable we surround with greater honour, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honour to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honoured, all the parts share its joy. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it." (1 Cor 12, 13-14; 20-21; 26-27).

This intense passage taken from St Paul's Letter to the Corinth, reveals the salvific horizon of the mystical body of Christ and the communion of life which exists and flows through every member of the Church who, through baptism, is grafted as a living branch into the one vine Jesus Christ. For this mystery to become reality we must respond to the grace of participating in, sharing, and accepting unconditionally God's Love which unites us in one body. Reciprocal love is not optional it is the new commandment.

The primordial enemy of authentic communion is individualism, which gives first place to self love and glory instead of love of God and neighbour. Another enemy, ever present, is indifference; things which are not on my personal horizon, or are of no advantage to me, lie outside my life. We must combat tenaciously these viruses which circulate freely and are too often unchallenged. They infect the mind and actions of those who claim to believe in Christ but are weakened in consciousness of being a member of the one Body and have no desire for unity. What St Paul stigmatises happens: "the head tells the feet, I do not need you".

How often this "virus" creeps into the heart leading us away from the path of holiness and along a road of personal exaltation, where instead of the Lord sitting down to eat, we sit and expect to be served by Him! Repeatedly Jesus taught us with his preaching and his life that no man is an island and that all true disciples are united with all disciples and need all disciples: or we will build nothing! A drop alone does not fill the chalice but many drops together can fill it, but each drop has made itself all for all.

The unity of Christians, the vital communion of life, unanimity of heart and mind must be a priority in the life of the believer whose motto must be: I have made myself a slave to everyone! (1Cor 9, 22). In this immense task Mary Mother of God invoked as Mother of Unity comes to our aid.

The Church is "firmly convinced", (introduction to the formula for the Holy Mass in honour of the Mother of Unity, "that the cause of Christian unity is properly linked to the function of the spiritual maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary" (cfr Leo XIII, Encyclical "Adiutricem populi": AAS 28, 1895-1896, p. 135).

Without the Mother, Christ's disciples are dispersed, the drops never unite and lose their energy. This consideration calls to mind rivulets which never unite to form a river, and so are lost and run dry. Christ wishes his Church to be "one flock with one shepherd" (Jn 10, 16), giving Peter as Shepherd and Mary as Mother.

The Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us "Like Christ himself, the Church is not only the instrument of unity, but also its efficacious sign. And the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ and of the Church, is the Mother of that mystery of unity which Christ and the Church inseparably signify and build up, in the world and throughout history." (Benedict XVI a Ephesus, il 29 November 2006). In the light of this mystery we must rediscover the power of the Marian prayer par excellence: the Holy Rosary; the Supreme Pontiffs have requested its recitation in community especially to obtain for the Church and the world unity and peace at all levels, starting with the family. Wherever the Rosary is recited, quietly at home, publicly in church in front of the Blessed Sacrament, on busy or

empty sidewalks, without a doubt Mary's intercession is impressed on those signs of grace so desired by her beloved Son Jesus Christ. (Agenzia Fides 24/1/2007, righe 51; parole 774)