

**Brothers and Sisters, Grace to you and peace from God our Father
And the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

I've probably said it a million times, I love the gospel of John. Today we have some mystical language, the language of union; "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us." This is the prayer Jesus has with his disciples before he is arrested and crucified.

Franciscan Priest, Richard Rohr says that God's greatest desire is for union. To be completely at one... And this is at the heart of what Trinity is all about; the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It's a relationship of complete self-giving of one to the other...

Three distinct and separate entities, different in purpose, and united in love. In other words, it is a love relationship embracing differences.

This is the same meaning as in the Body of Christ, where we are all different from one another, yet Christ is the unity amidst all our differences. We see this throughout Jesus teaching.

This union amidst differences is a spiritual dynamic; the integration of the differences is what leads to wholeness. This wholeness, this union amidst difference, is observed and experienced in many different ways. In the natural world, symbiosis is the mutually beneficial relationship between organisms.

In society, we all have different jobs, and they all contribute to the larger benefit of the whole community... Even in obscure things like pasture management; you

want cool season grasses for spring and fall growth. You want warm season grasses for the hot weather. Legumes like clover or trefoil to fix nitrogen which is used by the grasses.

The diversity leads to stability. Over time the pasture is not only more productive, it can withstand drought and temperature fluctuations... There is wholeness, in the integration of the many differences.

God desires for us to be in union with him and with one another, and particularly in our differences. We all have a role to play for the benefit of the larger community. This is the union we are called into. Not that we're all the same, but that we love one another. This union within community, is a communion... It is a wholeness, an appreciation for how we are all part and parcel of a bigger picture.

Now please understand, this communion, this community in union is a different kind of community than has ever existed before. This is the church; literally the body of Christ. And it is fundamentally different than the rest of all other human communities.

Let me try to explain... Memetic theory is a systematic body of thought which proposes that human beings come to want what they want through imitation. Memetic comes from the word mime, to imitate. The theory suggests that human conflict originates from competing wants. And those wants are modeled for us by other people.

If you have two boys and one toy, eventually they will both want to have the toy and instead of sharing it, they will fight each other for it. You've seen this-- it

happens all the time. And if you present a different toy, thinking that both boys will be satisfied, you will quickly learn that the boys will disregard the first toy and start fighting over the second toy! They are imitating each other's wants

This is basic mimetic theory. It's easy to see with children. And as adults, we fool ourselves into thinking we're above all that, but in truth, no so much, we still find ourselves as rivals with one another over those things that we want.

And those things we want can come in many different shapes and sizes. They can be material things or skills... I want to play guitar like Brad Paisley... They can be political views... There seems to be a lot of political conflict in our country these days, each side blaming the other...

We all think we're so smart! In reality, we're just little boys fighting over toys. And truth is, in this regard, republicans and democrats are absolutely no different from one another!

In every community there are competing wants... When the tension gets too unbearable, someone points the finger and says, all our problems are because of that person. It's better to blame one person than let the situation get out of hand. That's called scapegoating.

As the chief priest Ciaphas said, "It's better for Jesus to die, then to let the whole culture be plunged into chaos." Kind of an all against one, instead of an all against all situation...

The big word for all this is the generative mimetic scapegoating mechanism. It's generative because it produces human culture. And unfortunately, rooted in violence.

Throughout human history, scapegoating has had both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, scapegoating has been good because it allowed people to live together. It was efficacious; it really worked... It really did bring communities together!

But the problem is that scapegoating killed innocent victims. The person accused for the blame may not have had anything to do with the conflict. In other words, the unity of the community comes at the expense of a victim; the unity is achieved through violence.

This is what led to the sacrificial practices we read about in the Old Testament, where animals are sacrificed for the forgiveness of sin. In other words, God was connected with the violence.

Now, the unity in community that Jesus is talking about, is completely different. This is a coming together not built on the sacrificing of others; but sacrificing ourselves in service to others. It's the exact opposite. Can you see how this communion, or community in union, is built on love and not on violence? This is a pickup your cross and follow me way of being...

What's interesting about Jesus and history, is that this crucifixion and resurrection story, has forever changed the trajectory of humanity. It has certainly changed how we think about God.

So, how do we experience this in our own very real lives here and now? Well, wherever and whenever we come together as different people and have love for one another, a community in union, a communion, we are a sign of a different kind of Kingdom.

And that's the good news, God brings us together! God is our wholeness... We are all different, and we belong to one another. When the world out there wants us to choose sides and start fighting, the church insists we love one another, not only the people who think like us, but everyone... This is where republicans and democrats love each other...

Every time I go out visiting, I hear stories of how you care for one another. I hear stories of bringing food... Giving rides... Little notes of encouragement...

I remember visiting a member one day, we were chatting about church stuff. The phone rang, she answered the call, and it was another one of our members just calling to check in. When they were done talking, I was a little surprised by who it was. I asked, "Is she a good friend of yours?" She said, no, just through church... You see, church is a bond...

Oh, make no mistake, we are a community fraught with all the same things as all communities-- but we are one in Jesus. We are baptized and set free; Jesus is the unity amidst all our diversity. We think differently, we all have different opinions, but Jesus is our center and our wholeness.

God has sowed seeds of love in our hearts, we belong to each other, and we love and support each other. When I see the miracle of Sunday Morning fellowship, with everyone checking in with each other, communing together, working on projects together... So many things... It makes my heart sing. There is a lot of wholeness here...

We really have a lot to celebrate. We have a lot to be grateful for. We are a different kind of community, as Jesus prayed; "I made your name known to them... so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

And indeed, that love is in us, we have become brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. All different, a community in union, a communion, and all for the sake of the world...

Amen...