

Father Dave's Homily

01/20/13 2 C

-- *Why can't we just get along?* Those words were uttered some 20 years ago by Rodney King following the riots after his beating by police in Los Angeles. They could just as easily have been the words of St. Paul to the small Christian community in the Greek city of Corinth.

-- They were a fairly small group, probably not much more than 100 people in a good-sized city. But they had already developed factions after a few years of existence as a local Church.

-- Some of the divisions had to do with who was their favorite preacher. Others had to do with their economic and social status. In any case, they were using their gifts and talents against each other rather than in cooperation with each other.

-- Paul knew that was destructive. He knew they had many gifts, and he mentions some of them in today's 2nd reading. He tried to tell them that the Holy Spirit is the source of all these gifts, so they shouldn't be in competition with each other. But he felt like he was hitting a brick wall.

-- So much of this letter has been consumed with pointing out their responsibilities to each other in faith, hope and love. They were such talented and resourceful people. But they didn't always use those resources well.

-- Doesn't that describe how God's people have acted over the ages so often? Doesn't that point out many of the problems that plague parish communities today? Doesn't that go to the heart of our divisions?

-- All too often we are too concerned about who is most important or whose cause is most critical. We want to know who has the power, rather than seeking the power that is most critical—the power of God's grace.

-- If we really trust in God, we will discover that God has given us the gifts we need. No one person has them all, but together we have been given what we need. But those gifts are for the common good.

-- Looking out for the common good doesn't come naturally to most of us. As Americans we are individualistic. But God still prods us to look beyond our needs to the needs of the community.

-- It's not by coincidence that we read this as we also read a gospel about Jesus at a wedding. For he invites us into his loving embrace as a groom embraces his bride. Jesus blessed that union by his presence and by working a great sign.

-- God invites us into his community of love and challenges us to see his gifts in our brothers and sisters in Christ. During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity he also invites us to see his gifts at work in other Christian communities, and to pray for greater unity with them.

-- We will hear more about that next week as pastor Keith Hunsinger of Trinity Lutheran joins me to reflect on Vatican II's *Decree on Ecumenism*.

-- Meanwhile, we would do well to heed Mary's words in the gospel to the wedding stewards. Speaking about Jesus, she says *Do whatever he tells you*.

-- Today, Jesus is telling us to appreciate our own spiritual gifts and to use them for the good of all God's people. He is asking us to value the gifts of others rather than harboring envy, jealousy or scorn for their talents.

-- Following that formula, and paying attention to Jesus' words, we will find...as Christians have found over the centuries...that we can "just get along" ...and much more. We can also rejoice in God's gifts to all of us.