

**01/24/16 ..... 3 C**

-- I'm sure you've heard this or something similar before. A friend of yours says *I don't need to go to Church to find God. I can find him when I'm out hunting or fishing in the wilderness. That's what I do on Sunday.*

-- Even if he's sincere, there's a crucial point he's missing. Worship isn't about a private conversation with God (as necessary as that is). It's about coming together as a community. We need that. But, at the same time, it's a challenge to do that well.

-- The young community of Christians at Corinth struggled with that. It was hard to get along when they came from different social classes, preferred different preachers and had different practices and talents.

-- But that's what being followers of Christ is all about. It means doing the hard work to strive together toward a common goal, to hold each other in loving care, to look out for the good of all in the community.

-- Paul used the body to show how a church community functioned for good or for ill. All the parts of the body need each other, especially the most vulnerable. Each has a different function, but they all contribute to the health of the body if they do their jobs.

-- And they need each other. Isn't that true about any Christian community, especially a parish? Sure, a parish needs a good pastor, one who will function as a head. But the body is not all head.

-- All too often we think of certain jobs and tasks in parish life as essential and others as not so important. But the person who sweeps floors or packs food baskets for the poor is as essential as the religious education teacher. Both are needed and contribute to the good of the body.

-- For the Church is not just a social organization like Lions Club or scouts, which people join, pay dues and participate only to the extent they like. The Church is a true body; we are united to each other.

-- Like any body, we will have challenges. Not everything goes smoothly all the time. But true Christians work at resolving differences in charity, rather than simply protecting their turf.

-- We are the body of Christ, right here at St. Caspar's and as a part of the local Church of the Diocese of Toledo. We need each other.

-- And we need all our fellow Christian sisters and brothers. Today at the Cathedral, many of us will gather in an ecumenical prayer service after a reflection on Pope Francis' letter On the Care of Creation. This affects the whole body of Christ and, indeed, all of humankind.

-- We stand up as a Church for the rights of the unborn, the aged, the poor, the refugee and all vulnerable people. For, as St. Paul says, if one part of the body suffers, all parts suffer.

-- All this is a challenge in our individualistic American culture. It's difficult in a society where many propose putting up walls to keep people out rather than promoting unity in a diversity of peoples.

-- We need each other here at St. Caspar's. We need all of our talents and gifts. We also need these in our greater community and Church. And we cannot write off people who may be different from ourselves.

-- Yes, those differences can make it a challenge to work together. But, when we make a sincere effort to do that, we begin to become that Body of Christ we are called to be.

-- And, the more we express gratitude to God for our gifts... and to others around us for their gifts... the more we will see the life of Christ alive in our community.