

01/22/17 3A

-- There's a saying about the Jesuits: get 4 of them together and you're sure to get 5 different opinions. That could be said about a lot of groups. Congress isn't the only body that finds it hard to agree on anything.

-- The young Christian community at Corinth in Greece had a similar problem. They were having trouble finding unity. Their problems weren't so much about faith matters; they centered on which teacher they preferred... on who was their hero. And they were arguing. Sound familiar?

-- This wasn't a big community, maybe 100 adults at best. But we find out later in the letter that they weren't just hitching their wagons to different teachers. They were even taking each other to secular courts in lawsuits (that didn't just begin in our lifetimes).

-- Coming together as a united Christian community has always been a bumpy ride. Divisions developed between Christians of the East and the West over ethnic differences and over whether Rome or Constantinople was in charge. Even today Orthodox Christians are divided from us.

-- 500 years ago, a monk named Martin Luther wasn't pleased with some practices in the Church. He asked for some reforms. But his pleas were seen as threatening to some in authority and misunderstood by others.

-- Those misunderstandings grew into a split in the German Church, which eventually spread thru Europe. Attempts to repair that division at the time were too little, too late.

-- Once again, the question St. Paul asked in our 2nd reading *Is Christ divided?* would echo throughout the Church. For a number of years we've recognized that this situation is not good, and calls have gone out to work for the unity of Christians.

-- We have made much progress. But Sunday morning is still the most segregated time of the week. This is true in regard to our denominational commitments, our ethnic and social profiles and even, to a large extent,

our economic status. We're not as comfortable as we should be worshipping with different people.

-- Maintaining unity even within Churches is not easy. It's too tempting to have greater allegiance to certain human leaders in the Church than to Christ himself. But unity does not mean having the same opinion on all issues. Unity comes from our commitment to Christ and his teaching.

-- We have discovered this as we've come together as Christians in dialogue. We are doing this on the local level in our Lutheran-Catholic dialogue in Wauseon (which meets again Monday evening).

-- We are currently in the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This year's theme is *Reconciliation: The Love of Christ Compels Us*. That love compelled St. Paul to plead for reconciliation and unity among the Christians in Corinth.

-- Reconciliation is desperately needed in our world today, where wars ravage in many spots. It is sorely needed in our nation, which has a new President after a divisive election. And it is needed in our Church, on the larger level, in our parishes and in the family, which is the first and most important level of the Church.

-- May each of us resolve to do what we can to bring reconciliation where we live and on the levels we can influence. After all, the love of Christ compels us to do so.