

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Jan. 26th 2025; Cycle – C
Neh. 8:2-4, 5-6, 8-10; 1Cor. 12:12-30; LK 1:1-4, 4:14-21

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

We know how complex and how organized our human body is. As many small and big organs work with coordination the body functions healthily. If one small part quit working, it can disturb the whole body system. So no organ can claim that it is superior to other ones. As St. Paul observes, if a small part of the body is in pain or in sickness the entire body becomes sick and helpless. So each part has a specific role to play in the wellbeing of the entire body.

In the second reading of today, through the analogy of the body and its members St. Paul is teaching the divided Corinthians the lesson of unity in diversity and how important the role of each member is in building up the community. Some members of the Christian community in Corinth started feeling superior complex due to their talents and looked at the less talented members with contempt. As a result dissensions popped up in the community. Even after becoming Christians they could not shed their complexes and differences and Paul was afraid of the total ruin of the community. St Paul's letter sheds tremendous Divine Light on the dignity of the human body, the human person and the Body of Christ-the Church. The Church is not simply the constructed building of our local parish or diocesan cathedral, or just the houses of worship; but the Church, Christ's Body, is made up of all of us, clergy and laity alike. So through the analogy of the body and its parts Paul was explaining to them that the members of the community vary in gifts and talents. At the same time they are equally important for the growth of the community. When the members contribute their different talents for the building up of the community which is the Body of Christ, a healthy community is formed.

This same analogy is well applied in the modern community too. If we take the case of our individual community, we know how diverse the members are. A community is comprised of the adults, who have energy to do any hard task; the elderly, who are well experienced in life; the sick and the homebound, who have set apart good legacies; the young who are growing in wisdom and learning and also having full of energy and talents and the children who are totally dependent. At the same time all these members are closely united as they have received the same baptism and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In other words they belong to the same Body of Christ, the community. There is nobody in our community who can be labeled as good for nothing. All are gifted with some talents or gifts with variation. The community is not identified with any one member or the pastor alone; but it needs the support of all its members co-operating as one.

For instance, some of you are talented as good administrators and leaders; some are gifted with ideas; others are good organizers; there are people who are capable of doing repair and maintenance work; yet there are good artists among you who can decorate the Church during different liturgical seasons; some of you can stand before the congregation and proclaim the Word of God meaningfully; there are people whose pleasing nature make them good ushers and greeters; there are people who are capable of supporting the community financially; there are active kids who can be good altar servers. These are just a few examples of our diverse talents available in our community.

At the same time we should not get the impression that one talent or gift is superior to the other. Each talent has a place in the community. When all these talents are put together a healthy community is formed. Please remember the fact that the task of building up a community does not just rest on the priest and the Parish Council and Finance Council alone; rather it rests on every member of the community. No one can stay back with the excuse of having fewer gifts.

In the modern age we see more and more indifference among the community members and many think that let others do it. Many back up thinking that they are not talented enough to do anything. Please remember, Jesus never chose the talented ones; rather the good willing people. Once they opted for him they were made capable by the Lord. Similarly, when we set out to do something good, it is the Lord who gives us the strength. What is important for Jesus are not our quality and qualification; rather our willingness to do something for his Community. It is an alarming truth that these days the pious associations in the parishes are at the verge of a closure due to the lack of members. If this trend goes like this, eventually the Community itself will come to a dead end. So let us not feel shy to give the community whatever is possible.