

Jim's Notes
November 21, 2007
The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians
Ephesians 4:4 - 6

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4

St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)

What is this one body? They are the faithful throughout the world -- in the present, in the past and in the future. . . .The body does exist apart from its enlivening spirit, else it would not be a body. It is a common human metaphor to say of things that are united and have coherence that they are one body. So we too take the term body as an expression of unity. (Homily on Ephesians 10.4.4)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

His words one body and one Spirit can be taken most simply to mean the one body of Christ, which is the Church. Or it could refer to the humanity of the Lord, which he assumed from the Virgin. . . . Yet indeed the one body can also refer to life and the works that are called in Greek "the practical life," These are distinguished from the oneness of the Spirit in the heart that finds its unity in contemplation.

If the Father's house has many mansions, how are we to say that we are called to one hope? One reply is that the one hope of the calling is the kingdom of God. It is as though we were to speak of the one house of God or say that in one house are many mansions. . . . Or again, this subtler meaning may be implied: at the end and consummation of all things everything is to be restored to its original condition, when we are all made one body and formed anew into a perfect man. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.4.3-4)

Ephesians 4:5

St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (AD 337-397)

There are many kinds of baptism, but one baptism is the cry of the apostle, Why? There are so-called baptisms among unbelievers, but they are not baptisms. They are washings but cannot be baptisms. (On the Sacraments 2.1.2)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

There is one Lord and one God, because the dominion of Father and Son is a single Godhead. The faith is said to be one because we believe similarly in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptism is one. We are all baptized in the same way in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are immersed three times so that the sacrament of the Trinity may be apparent. . . . There is one baptism in the Spirit, in water and in fire. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.4.5-6)

Ephesians 4:6a

Origen (AD 185 – 251):

He is God and Father of all by being the God but not the Father of some and both God and Father of others. It is as if, picking out ten men of whom five were some one's sons and five his slaves, one said, "this is the lord and father of all ten." (Epistle to the Ephesians)

Ephesians 4:6b

Origen (AD 185 – 251):

It is impossible to speak of any parts or division in the incorporeal, but he is in all and through all and above all . . . insofar as he is understood as either Wisdom or Word or life or truth, an interpretation which undoubtedly excludes all local confinement. (On First Principles 4.4.31)

Origen (AD 185 – 251):

Here is a physical analogy to a spiritual truth: We can agree that the sun is above all things on earth. But by its rays it might be said at the same time to be through all. And insofar as the power of its light penetrates everywhere, it could also be said to be in all. It is in this way, I think, that God's majesty is denoted by the phrase above all. God's all-sufficiency is denoted in the words through all. It also belongs to the power of God to penetrate into all, so that because of his being in all no one is entirely void of him. (Epistle to the Ephesians)

St. Gregory of Nyssa (AD 335-394):

One God contains all and guides all as is fitting and is in all, This one saying of Paul suffices by itself to express everything succinctly, when he says that God is over all and through all and in all. (Refutation of Eunomius's "Confessions of Faith" 169)

St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (AD 337-397)

God the Father owes his existence to no one. Hence he is declared to be over all and through all. He is through all in the sense that all things come from him. Necessarily he will be over all the things that come from him. And God is in all, that is, dwelling in all the

faithful. For he is in us by our confession, because we confess him, and he has given us his own Spirit, through which without doubt he is dwelling in us. He is not in the same sense dwelling in unbelievers who deny that he is the Father of Christ. (Epistle to the Ephesians 4.5.1-2)

St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430):

Those who read very closely recognize the Trinity in this passage. Paul writes of God the Father "who is above all and through all and in all" (Romans 11:36). All things are from God, who owes his existence to no one. All things are through him, as though to say through the Mediator. All things are in him, as though to say in the One who contains them, that is, reconciles them into one. (On Faith and the Creed 19)

St. Irenaeus (AD 180)

As I have already observed, the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it.

She also believes these points (of doctrine) just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth.

For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same.

For the Churches which have been planted in Germany do not believe or hand down anything different, nor do those in Spain, nor those in Gaul, nor those in the East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Libya, nor those which have been established in the central regions of the world. But as the sun, that creature of God, is one and the same throughout the whole world, so also the preaching of the truth shines everywhere, and enlightens all men that are willing to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Nor will any one of the rulers in the Churches, however highly gifted he may be in point of eloquence, teach doctrines different from these (for no one is greater than the Master); nor, on the other hand, will he who is deficient in power of expression inflict injury on the tradition.

For the faith being ever one and the same, neither does one who is able at great length to discourse regarding it, make any addition to it, nor does one, who can say but little diminish it. (Against Heresies 10.2)

St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (AD 200 - 258)

It is on one man that He builds the Church, and although He assigns a like power to all the Apostles after His resurrection, saying: "As the Father hath sent me, I do send you

... Received ye the Holy Spirit: if you forgive any man his sins, they shall be forgiven him; if you retain any man's, they shall be retained" (John 20:21-23), yet in order that the oneness might be unmistakable, he established by His own authority a source for that oneness having its origin in one man alone. No doubt the other Apostles were all that Peter was, endowed with equal dignity and power, but the start comes from him alone, in order to show that the Church of Christ is unique. . . . If a man does not hold fast to this oneness of the Church, does he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he resists and withstands the Church, has he still Confidence that he is in the Church, when the blessed Apostle Paul gives us this very teaching and points to the mystery of Oneness saying: "**One body and one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God**" (Ephesians 4:5-6)? Now to this oneness we must hold to firmly and insist on – especially we who are bishops and exercise authority in the Church – so as to demonstrate that the Episcopal power is one and undivided too. Let none mislead the brethren with a lie, let none corrupt the true content of the faith by a faithless perversion of the truth.

Pope Benedict XVI:

From here derive also Paul's exhortations in regard to the several charisms which animate and structure the Christian community. They can all be referred back to a single source, which is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, knowing well that in the Church there is no one who is lacking them, because, as the Apostle writes, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7).

What is important, however, is that all the charisms cooperate together for the building up of the community and that they not become instead a motive of laceration. To this end, Paul asks himself rhetorically: "Is Christ divided?" (1 Corinthians 1:13). He knows well and teaches us that it is necessary "**to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call**" (Ephesians 4:3-4). (Wednesday Audience: Paul's Teaching on the Church -- "We Who Are Many Are One Body": November 22, 2006)