"Unity: the first step to maturity in Christ"

(Ephesians 4:1-16)

➢ <u>Eph 4:11-13</u>

¹¹<u>The gifts he gave</u> were … ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, <u>for building up the body of Christ</u>,

¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, <u>to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ</u>."

➢ What is Maturity in Christ?

• How is it connected to Holiness?

• How essential is it? Is it something primarily:

✓ "nice to know",

✓ "good to have" ... or ,

✓ "needs to be"?

➢ What is Unity?

    - Oneness in mind and heart

    - Result of an intentional choice

➢ How is it possible?

    - Through the help of the Holy Spirit (of Unity)

➢ What is Maturity in Christ?

- to be <u>in relationship with Jesus Christ</u>, who not only invites us to be holy but enables us, through His Grace, to achieve that;

- *"Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." (Mk 3:35)*

➢ Entrusting our entire selves to God in the obedience of faith;

➢ Accepting that loving God involves loving others:

- *"The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."* (1Jn 4:21)

- *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* (Jn 13:35)

In Eph 4:1-16, St Paul traces the steps to maturity in Christ:

- Unity of relationships (unity in the Spirit in the bond of peace)
- Unity of the faith and of knowledge of Christ
- Maturity in Christ (Eph 4:11-13)

Eph 4:1-16

- Highlights three characteristics of a mature Christian community

1. <u>Unity of relationships</u>: characterised by humility, gentleness, kindness, patience, forbearance in love; unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace

2. <u>Unity & stability in doctrine</u> and in relationship with Christ;

3. <u>Fruitful ministry</u> according to the diverse gifts of the members under guidance of pastors and leaders.

<u>Unity of relationships</u>: characterised by humility, gentleness, kindness, patience, forbearance in love; unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- The Beatitudes : the recipe for happiness in relationships

- <u>Note</u>: The call to holiness is also a call to happiness!

➢ <u>Eph 4:1-3</u>

¹I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to <u>lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called</u>,

²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, <u>bearing with one another in love</u>,

³making every effort to <u>maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace</u>.

Eph 4:29-30:

[29]Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. [30]And <u>do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God</u>, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.

Eph 4:31-32:

[31]Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, [32]and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Eph 4:4-6

[4]There is <u>one body</u> and <u>one Spirit</u>, just as you were called to the <u>one hope</u> of your calling,

[5]<u>one Lord</u>, <u>one faith</u>, <u>one baptism</u>,

[6]<u>one God and Father of all</u>, who is above all and through all and in all."

➢ <u>Eph 4:11-13</u>

[11]<u>The gifts he gave</u> were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,

[12]to equip the saints for the work of ministry, <u>for building up the body of Christ</u>,

➢ <u>Eph 4:11-13</u>

¹³until all of us come <u>to the unity of the faith</u> and of the knowledge of the Son of God, <u>to maturity</u>, to <u>the measure of the full stature of Christ</u>."

➢ <u>Eph 4:11-13</u>

[13]until all of us come to:

- the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,

- maturity, the measure of the full stature of Christ."

Practical examples of how to foster these virtues in communities:

- Cf. *Gaudete et Exsultate,* ch 3 – the beatitudes of meekness, mercy, peacemaker;
- Cf. *Gaudete et Exsultate,* ch 4 – the first signs of holiness: perseverance, patience, meekness.

Practical examples of how to foster these virtues in communities:

- Cf. *Gaudete et Exsultate,* ch 3 – the beatitudes of meekness, mercy, peacemaker

The Pope reminds us of "*the great criterion*" by which we will be judged worthy or unworthy of the Kingdom of Heaven:

As often as we did (or did not) do good to those in need, we did (or did not) do good to Christ.

Mt 5:5,7,9

'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Practical examples of how to foster these virtues in communities:

- Cf. *Gaudete et Exsultate,* ch 4 – the first signs of holiness: perseverance, patience, meekness.

<u>Eph 4:14-16</u> :

"But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16]from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love."