

## CHRISTIAN UNITY

Ps. 133:1-3; 2 Cor. 12:12-31; John 17:9-19

Int. We have a closed mind regarding other churches. Says two priest and one laywoman. I have a strong prejudice against the Roman Catholics, especially the priests says one UCCP pastor. The prayer for Christian Unity celebration this week led by Koinonia Davao opened our eyes. It is our first time to enter a Protestant church, and also first time to worship with them, says the two priest. And we felt a joy in our hearts. The UCCP pastor says, I felt it is always wrong to enter a Roman Catholic Church, more especially sitting or talking to a priest. This is the reason I do not participate in any ecumenical movement where Roman Catholics are involve. One day says the UCCP Pastor I traveled to Cagayan de Oro by bus. I sat beside a man and we talk together. He is good to talk with. He even offered to bring me to the UCCP church in Cagayan oro when I told him I don't know the place. When the bus stop for lunch we sat in the same table when I notice that he prayed before eating I ask Him what church he belongs he said he is a priest of the Roman Catholic church. So I said mababait naman pala ang mga Pari. Then she pointed to one of the priest who just shared and said he too is a catolico sarado. Yes, both of them, a priest and a Protestant Pastor who once consider themselves "sarado" or closed mind regarding other Christians found themselves, together singing, praying and studying God's Word.

These are just some of the wonderful experiences shared during this weeks prayer for Christian Unity. It is a glowing spark and small bits of fulfillment of the wish of God for his own people as he revealed to us through the Psalmist when he said: "Oh, how good and pleasant it is when people dwell together in Unity."

### I. JESUS PRAYED THAT THE CHURCH MIGHT BE UNITED.

This too, is one of the wish of Christ for his own disciples, and expressed it in his prayer as recorded in our Gospel Reading. Unity among his own is obviously something he regarded as supremely important "that they may be one". Jesus prayed for unity in the fellowship of believers, for he knew the danger of discord that had kept lurking its ugly head within the church from its very establishment. you remember the dispute which arose among the disciples of Jesus because they were arguing about their positions in the kingdom of God. desire or hunger for positions of honor in the church always brings about disunity.

Paul also chided the Corinthians for they divided the body of Christ when each one of them said, "I belong to Paul' or I belong to Apollos or I belong to Peter or I belong to Christ." So he strongly wrote in 1 cor. 1:10, "I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment."

This prayer of Jesus becomes even more meaningful as we admit that the church of our time is obviously not united. Disunity is the chief characteristic of the church both in broad and specific cases. We see hundreds of denominations, some boasting that are the only true church. We also see local churches that resembles little more than armed camps, one group against the other. Even in



the same denominations some churches are divided by bitterness, debates, and personality conflicts.

Surely, however, when Christians have that desire to seek unity, God's Holy Spirit will do her part. Take for example, Koinonia Davao was surprised to see the Worldwide Church of God participating during this week of prayer for Christian Unity. We see it as the fruits of the unity being pursued by Koinonia Davao. We praised God for it.

## II. WE MUST BE UNITED THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE.

Jesus foreknew this kind of human division. He knew that a divided faith had nothing to offer to a divided world. This means that we should set a united Christian community as our highest priority.

St. Paul draws a picture of the kind of unity that the Church of Christ should be. He says in verse 12 of 2 Cor. 12 "for just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" and in verse 27 he says, "Now you are the body of Christ and individual members of it"

Now if we look at our body, we see in amazement at the unity that exist and works in our human body.

We all know that no jealousy exist among the members of the human body. It is said that the hand is the most useful of the human body. We usually say when we need help, "Give me a hand please." "Lend me a hand please." We do not say, give me a nose, or give me an eye or a foot. The hands helps every other members of the body. When you want food to be put in your mouth, you call on the hand. It is the hand that first come to protect your eyes. It is the hand that is called to scratch the itches at your back. to button your shirt, to put on your shoes, comb your hair, brush your teeth, carry your groceries, etc.

The hand is indeed very useful and important. And yet the hand does not take so much pride in its importance, and does not say to the foot, "I have no need of you." The hand realises that he cannot carry the groceries without the help of the feet, nor find the groceries to be carried without the help of the eyes. Yes, the hand is very important and yet the other members of the body do not try to be the hand. A working principle that binds them together is that "all the members of the body need one another at one time or another. Each one is important. Each has its own place.

Thus it is in our church, the body of Christ. Each one member of the church is useful and important to the other members and to the whole church at one time or another. Therefore, says Paul, we must all strive for unity "that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another"(v.25). Therefore, if there is disunity in our church, we should set about bringing unity. If we every truly set our hearts to this task, we will be understanding in our judgment, more careful in our speaking, and more tolerant in our attitudes and more sincere in our prayers for the other Christian. On top of all, we must earnestly desire the "more excellent way," the way of love.

During the second day of Bishop Granadosin in Mindanao we joined



him in a mission of reconciliation. It is one of the commission of our institution in Mindanao. One party said, you may be sued in court, your words maybe be used againts you, you may faced possible damages or be imprisoned. When the Bishop spoke up, he declared that there had been words used that are foreign to the language of the Christian church, such as "being sued in court, damages. etc." The words that should have the most impact should be repentance, forgiveness and love. The other party was not prepared for this process of solving the problem. they also have no weapon againts it. so repentance, forgiveness and love won the day for the United Methodist church.

As we give importance with bringing unity in our church denomination, let us remember also that we are members of the Church Universal. There is only one body of Christ, though there are many denominations. we must seek unity among the many parts of Christ body, and relate with other Christian believers in love, "that the world may believe."

Koinonia Davao, a forum for christian unity in the city, sets the example and leads the way. Who are the members of Koinonia Davao: The RC , LCP, IFI, UCCP, PEC , UMC, SA. (described each and the cause of their division). Now the leaders of these churches are meeting once a month for fellowship, sharing, Bible study, prayers and a meal. Gone are the hatred, rancor and negative prejudiced. It is replace by tolerance, desire for unity, and love. With these spirit we were able to joined in a spiritual retreat, caroling for the concerns of the group, and went on giving gifts at gravahan Matina. It is also in this relationship of faith and love that Bishop and archbishops, Pastors and priest, deaconesses and sisters have build bridge of unity for common concern.

Archbishop Capalla promised to bring to the attention of FVR the case of a group of native Methodist in Kiamba being driven out of their ancestral lands.

The UCCP has offered and is still offering the services of their Foundation to all the members of the Koinonia Davao churches for Eye Cataract Operation, a yearound program at a very very minimal cost and also their coming operation smile, plastic surgery for ngo-ngo and other operation on the face.

The PIC also is offering their sewing livelihood training program, free.

We also said, that our children and youth program are girds to help people regardless of their denomination. Survey says that we cater mostly to Roman Catholics, and assured them our only desire is to nurture them that they may grow to Christian maturity.

CONCLUSION: Brothers and sisters we are linked together in Davao city with the other members of the body of Christ. The best contribution to Christian unity by our church is first and foremost the reconciliation of persons to Christ, and then the nurture to Christian maturity of these christian community, and lastly to build a strong United Methodist church from which we can share to the larger Christian community the things that we have for the honor and glory of God.