

Trinity, Eucharist Each Remind us of how Love Unites us

Six years ago, Justice Antonin Scalia died, who was known as one of the more conservative justices on the court. A few years later, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died, known as one of the more liberal justices. In today's hyper-partisan era, it might seem two such people who often voted differently would only be united in wanting to prove the other wrong. But in their case, they were the best of friends. Ginsburg said of Scalia, "we were the best of buddies." Ginsburg said that Scalia made her a better person. One night when onstage for an interview, she talked about a time when Scalia showed her his dissenting opinion in a case before she finished writing the majority opinion. In her words, "I took this dissent, this very spicy dissent and it absolutely ruined my weekend" she said. But it caused her to make some changes to her own argument. She said at his passing: "Toward the end of the opera Scalia/Ginsburg, tenor Scalia and soprano Ginsburg sing a duet: "We are different, we are one," different in our interpretation of written texts, one in our reverence for the Constitution and the institution we serve. From our years together at the D.C. Circuit, we were best buddies." Two people very different, who chose not to be divided by fear or envy, but who chose to love one another, and serve something more than themselves and their egos.

All of us, while different, are also united. We are Americans; we are Christians; we are humans; we are created by God who loves us all the same. And we each are called to respond to this love.

Unfortunately, the impacts of original sin can mess things up. And one of the things we've always had as humans is division; going back to Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel.

On the one hand, division is not a bad thing; we are each unique. And there are also moral absolutes and things we have to fight for and take a stand against. But sometimes we can always be ready to see the person as "other" or as someone we have to "fix" or as an opponent, when truth be told all of us have things we can work on. There is also common ground with those with whom we disagree. And lest we get high on our horse, we need others to help us learn how to grow too.

This week and last week, we've celebrated two important feasts; namely Trinity Sunday last week, and this week the Body and Blood of Christ. And one common theme with both is the importance of unity; the Eucharist is meant to open our eyes to how much God loves us, but is given to all, and there is meant to be a unity in Christ's Body of believers that we should strive for. The Trinity; Father Son and Spirit are distinct but united too.

So a good thing to ponder from time to time is how do we get to greater unity and the kind of friendship that Scalia and Ginsburg had; where they disagreed quite a bit, but both served a higher purpose and cared for one another?

One is listening, namely to God, to our conscience, to the Church, and to one another. We talk quite a bit as humans. But by listening we can learn so much. We can listen to what God is telling us to do, especially when we are looking for direction on how to deal with challenging people. We also should listen and trust the Church God gave us. In the words of GK Chesterton, the famous Catholic apologist and writer, "I don't need a church to tell me I'm wrong where I already know I'm wrong; I need a Church to tell me I'm wrong where I think I'm right." The Church will sometimes challenge us when She teaches on moral issues, but this is to help us grow in grace and knowledge of God. And with respect to others, sometimes we want to "fix" people and it could be there is something that really needs "fixing" like the choices someone makes. But when we listen, we can hear what someone is saying or trying to say. We can get insight into what formulated their opinions on things or where they are getting their information from. We can also show empathy and say "I can understand you feel this way but here's where I'm coming from and why the Church feels so strongly on this."

Once we have those foundations, we can engage in civil argument, which is different than shouting or attacking. Arguing is a good thing; it's something I stress at every wedding Mass because if we just bottle things up or never talk, naturally that will make a marriage or relationship toxic. For true growth to happen, we need to have challenging discussions. Maybe we really want someone to just see something we know to be true and is a core part of our faith; take coming to Mass on a Sunday. The truth of this being important will never change. But if we just shame people, it's not going to get them to change. Maybe multiple discussions won't either. But the more we engage with people and have conversations with them about matters of our faith, the more we can get them to think and the more we can also understand where they are coming from. This also spills over into other areas too - it's a great blueprint to follow when we are talking about politics or things that we are passionate about. Remaining calm, not raising our voice, and engaging in conversation can be a true path to better relationships between one another.

It's important to remember tolerance and patience are so very important too. We might not get someone to change, and while it's not a big deal if it's say who likes the Vikings or the Packers, it can be very difficult when we know people who believe things that are very contrary to what we hold to as a Catholic. What a tragedy though when anger or bitterness ruins not only dialogue but a relationship. Rather than focusing on the differences, try to focus on areas of common ground. Look for ways to have continued, ongoing dialogue. Be introspective; ask yourself are you the one who maybe needs to listen more or be more tolerant. And ask yourself how would Jesus treat this person? When we exhibit tolerance and patience, we just might find after a long period of time goes by that two people were changed for the better, both the person we have that disagreement with, and ourselves too because we became more calm, compassionate and understanding.

Lastly though, action is important too. The Father, Son and Spirit each act in the world. Sometimes we will be hated for speaking the truth and need to lovingly challenge others. Jesus tells us the Holy Spirit gives us the knowledge of what to say, but we also

see the martyrs filled with the Spirit's virtue of fortitude. We want to strive to not hate one another and cooperate, but this also means once we know our faith and prayerfully discern how to articulate it, we cannot fear speaking out for the moral truths of the Church, be it challenging a loved one who maybe making poor choices, or being the lone voice in a group that speaks on a moral issue that might not be popular.

Divisions will always be with us, and as Catholics we need to find that balance so we don't try to force our beliefs quickly, while at the same time not being cowards who never share their faith out of constant fear. The Eucharist gives us the fuel to engage the world, and opens up our eyes to how deeply God loves each and every one of us. Armed with this Spiritual strength, we can better engage one another by seeing one another as God sees us, and recognizing that while it takes work, with effort we can truly build one another up rather than tear one another down and become a true fisher of men.

Have a blessed week!

Fr. Paul

P.S. A very happy and blessed Father's Day to all of our dads. Thank you for your vocation, and for helping your children to come to know how much they are loved by God.