

Based on some readings from Catechism and Mystici Corporis citations pasted below.

(Use for Closing Thoughts in the Authority & Relationships presentation)

Quite literally, as members of the body of Christ, what one member does affects the other. Sin always radically affects the rest of the body of Christ. Think of it this way: if I judge and gossip about John to James, my action can invite James to agree and also gossip (causing another person to sin), or James can become hurt by my unloving actions that would certainly hurt John. James can feel burdened by my judgments and gossip. Anger, lust, gossip, greed, all of that cause division and harm the unity of the body.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit form a perfect community of self giving love, and the Holy Spirit, as the love shared between the Father and the Son, brings us together. The Holy Spirit is the source of our unity, our catholicity. A simple way of determining whether we are living in the Spirit is by determining whether we are united. Obviously we are flawed human beings, but I don't think unity means that everything is hunky dory. We know that we are united and living in the Spirit when each person knows his/her own flaws, but is also able to look and see Christ in each other person.

If we are the body of Christ (which we are), we exist not for ourselves, but for each other. Our salvation is not by faith alone, and our faith is not meant to be solely personal; instead we are justified by our faith and our works-- precisely because we are responsible for each other's well being. That is the insight to the teaching that God is love. Love is never self-serving, St. Paul reminds us. It is radically self-giving. Love does not mean being happy and comfortable, it means learning to love people whom we find difficult to love. It means living for others, praying unceasingly for each other.

When Catholics enter the sacrament of marriage, it is not about "being in love," but engaging in a relationship that can mirror God's love. It is about recognizing that in this vocation, you are called to help each other grow in holiness--- in fact, you need each other to grow in holiness, to be sanctified. In a similar way, all of God's people need each other to grow in holiness.

Catechism and Bible: The Body of Christ

II. The Church – Body of Christ (CCC 787-810)

The Church is communion with Jesus

787

From the beginning, Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to them, and gave them a share in his mission, joy, and sufferings.²¹⁵ Jesus spoke of a still more intimate communion between him and those who would follow him: "Abide in me, and I in you. . . . I am the vine, you are the branches."²¹⁶ And he proclaimed a mysterious and real communion between his own

body and ours: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."²¹⁷

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When his visible presence was taken from them, Jesus did not leave his disciples orphans. He promised to remain with them until the end of time; he sent them his Spirit.²¹⁸ As a result communion with Jesus has become, in a way, more intense: "By communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those brothers of his who are called together from every nation."²¹⁹

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The comparison of the Church with the body casts light on the intimate bond between Christ and his Church. Not only is she gathered around him; she is united in him, in his body. Three aspects of the Church as the Body of Christ are to be more specifically noted: the unity of all her members with each other as a result of their union with Christ; Christ as head of the Body; and the Church as bride of Christ.

"One Body"

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Believers who respond to God's word and become members of Christ's Body, become intimately united with him: "In that body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe, and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his Passion and glorification."²²⁰ This is especially true of Baptism, which unites us to Christ's death and Resurrection, and the Eucharist, by which "really sharing in the body of the Lord, . . . we are taken up into communion with him and with one another."²²¹

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The body's unity does not do away with the diversity of its members: "In the building up of Christ's Body there is engaged a diversity of members and functions. There is only one Spirit who, according to his own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives his different gifts for the welfare of the Church."²²² The unity of the Mystical Body produces and stimulates charity among the faithful: "From this it follows that if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with him, and if one member is honored, all the members together rejoice."²²³ Finally, the unity of the Mystical Body triumphs over all human divisions: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."²²⁴

"Christ is the Head of this Body"

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Christ "is the head of the body, the Church."²²⁵ He is the principle of creation and redemption. Raised to the Father's glory, "in everything he [is] preeminent,"²²⁶ especially in the Church, through whom he extends his reign over all things.

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Christ unites us with his Passover: all his members must strive to resemble him, "until Christ be formed" in them.²²⁷ "For this reason we . . . are taken up into the mysteries of his life, . . . associated with his sufferings as the body with its head, suffering with him, that with him we may be glorified."²²⁸

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Christ provides for our growth: to make us grow toward him, our head,²²⁹ he provides in his Body, the Church, the gifts and assistance by which we help one another along the way of salvation.

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Christ and his Church thus together make up the "whole Christ" (Christus totus). The Church is one with Christ. The saints are acutely aware of this unity:

Let us rejoice then and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ himself. Do you understand and grasp, brethren, God's grace toward us? Marvel and rejoice: we have become Christ. For if he is the head, we are the members; he and we together are the whole man. . . . The fullness of Christ then is the head and the members. But what does "head and members" mean? Christ and the Church.²³⁰

Our redeemer has shown himself to be one person with the holy Church whom he has taken to himself.²³¹

Head and members form as it were one and the same mystical person.²³²

A reply of St. Joan of Arc to her judges sums up the faith of the holy doctors and the good sense of the believer: "About Jesus Christ and the Church, I simply know they're just one thing, and we shouldn't complicate the matter."²³³

The Church is the Bride of Christ

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The unity of Christ and the Church, head and members of one Body, also implies the distinction of the two within a personal relationship. This aspect is often expressed by the image of bridegroom and bride. The theme of Christ as Bridegroom of the Church was prepared for by the prophets and announced by John the Baptist.²³⁴ The Lord referred to himself as the "bridegroom."²³⁵ The Apostle speaks of the whole Church and of each of the faithful, members of his Body, as a bride "betrothed" to Christ the

Lord so as to become but one spirit with him.²³⁶ The Church is the spotless bride of the spotless Lamb.²³⁷ "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her."²³⁸ He has joined her with himself in an everlasting covenant and never stops caring for her as for his own body:²³⁹

This is the whole Christ, head and body, one formed from many . . . whether the head or members speak, it is Christ who speaks. He speaks in his role as the head (ex persona capitis) and in his role as body (ex persona corporis). What does this mean? "The two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the Church."²⁴⁰ And the Lord himself says in the Gospel: "So they are no longer two, but one flesh."²⁴¹ They are, in fact, two different persons, yet they are one in the conjugal union, . . . as head, he calls himself the bridegroom, as body, he calls himself "bride."²⁴²

III. The Church Is the Temple of the Holy Spirit

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"What the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church."²⁴³ "To this Spirit of Christ, as an invisible principle, is to be ascribed the fact that all the parts of the body are joined one with the other and with their exalted head; for the whole Spirit of Christ is in the head, the whole Spirit is in the body, and the whole Spirit is in each of the members."²⁴⁴ The Holy Spirit makes the Church "the temple of the living God":²⁴⁵

Indeed, it is to the Church herself that the "Gift of God" has been entrusted. . . . In it is in her that communion with Christ has been deposited, that is to say: the Holy Spirit, the pledge of incorruptibility, the strengthening of our faith and the ladder of our ascent to God. . . . For where the Church is, there also is God's Spirit; where God's Spirit is, there is the Church and every grace.²⁴⁶

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The Holy Spirit is "the principle of every vital and truly saving action in each part of the Body."²⁴⁷ He works in many ways to build up the whole Body in charity:²⁴⁸ by God's Word "which is able to build you up";²⁴⁹ by Baptism, through which he forms Christ's Body;²⁵⁰ by the sacraments, which give growth and healing to Christ's members; by "the grace of the apostles, which holds first place among his gifts";²⁵¹ by the virtues, which make us act according to what is good; finally, by the many special graces (called "charisms"), by which he makes the faithful "fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church."²⁵²

Charisms

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Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world.

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Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well. They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms.²⁵³

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It is in this sense that discernment of charisms is always necessary. No charism is exempt from being referred and submitted to the Church's shepherds. "Their office [is] not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good,"²⁵⁴ so that all the diverse and complementary charisms work together "for the common good."²⁵⁵

IN BRIEF

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Christ Jesus "gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own" (Titus 2:14).

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"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pet 2:9).

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One enters into the People of God by faith and Baptism. "All men are called to belong to the new People of God" (LG 13), so that, in Christ, "men may form one family and one People of God" (AG 1).

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The Church is the Body of Christ. Through the Spirit and his action in the sacraments, above all the Eucharist, Christ, who once was dead and is now risen, establishes the community of believers as his own Body.

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In the unity of this Body, there is a diversity of members and functions. All members are linked to one another, especially to those who are suffering, to the poor and persecuted.

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The Church is this Body of which Christ is the head: she lives from him, in him, and for him; he lives with her and in her.

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The Church is the Bride of Christ: he loved her and handed himself over for her. He has purified her by his blood and made her the fruitful mother of all God's children.

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The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the soul, as it were, of the Mystical Body, the source of its life, of its unity in diversity, and of the riches of its gifts and charisms.

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"Hence the universal Church is seen to be 'a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'" (LG 4 citing St. Cyprian, *De Dom. orat.* 23: PL 4, 553).

notes:

217# Jn 6:56.

218# Cf. Jn 14:18; 20:22; Mt 28:20; Acts 2:33.

219# LG 7.

220# LG 7.

221# LG 7; cf. Rom 6:4-5; 1 Cor 12:13.

222# LG 7 § 3.

223# LG 7 § 3; cf. 1 Cor 12:26.

224# Gal 3:27-28.

225# Col 1:18.

226# Col 1:18.

227# Gal 4:19.

228# LG 7 § 4; cf. Phil 3:21; Rom 8:17.

229# Cf. Col 2:19; Eph 4:11-16.

230# St. Augustine, *In Jo. ev.* 21, 8: PL 35, 1568.

231# Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, *præf.*, 14: PL 75, 525A.

232# St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, 48, 2.

233# *Acts of the Trial of Joan of Arc*.

234# Jn 3:29.

235# Mk 2:19.

236# Cf. Mt 22:1-14; 25:1-13; 1 Cor 6:15-17; 2 Cor 11:2.
237# Cf. Rev 22:17; Eph 1:4, 5:27.
238# Eph 5:25-26.
239# Cf. Eph 5:29.
240# Eph 5:31-32.
241# Mt 19:6.
242# St. Augustine, En. in Ps. 74:4: PL 36, 948-949.
243# St. Augustine, Sermo 267, 4: PL 38, 1231D.
244# Pius XII, encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*: DS 3808.
245# 2 Cor 6:16; cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:21.
246# St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 24, 1: PG 7/1, 966.
247# Pius XII, encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*: DS 3808.
248# Cf. Eph 4:16.
249# Acts 20:32.
250# Cf. 1 Cor 12:13.
251# LG 7 § 2.
252# LG 12 § 2; cf. AA 3.
253# Cf. 1 Cor 13.
254# LG 12; cf. 30; 1 Thess 5:12, 19-21; John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 24.
255# 1 Cor 12:7.

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"Christ, 'holy, innocent, and undefiled,' knew nothing of sin, but came only to expiate the sins of the people. The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal."²⁹⁹ All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners.³⁰⁰ In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time.³⁰¹ Hence the Church gathers sinners already caught up in Christ's salvation but still on the way to holiness:

The Church is therefore holy, though having sinners in her midst, because she herself has no other life but the life of grace. If they live her life, her members are sanctified; if they move away from her life, they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity. This is why she suffers and does penance for those offenses, of which she has the power to free her children through the blood of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁰²

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Communion in charity. In the *sanctorum communio*, "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself."⁴⁸⁹ "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."⁴⁹⁰ "Charity does not insist on its own way."⁴⁹¹ In this solidarity with all men, living or dead, which is

founded on the communion of saints, the least of our acts done in charity redounds to the profit of all. Every sin harms this communion.

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The unity of the Mystical Body: the Eucharist makes the Church. Those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body—the Church. Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism. In Baptism we have been called to form but one body.²³³ The Eucharist fulfills this call: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."²³⁴

If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond "Amen" ("yes, it is true!") and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, "the Body of Christ" and respond "Amen." Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true.²³⁵

1469 (on the Sacrament of Confession)

This sacrament reconciles us with the Church. Sin damages or even breaks fraternal communion. The sacrament of Penance repairs or restores it. In this sense it does not simply heal the one restored to ecclesial communion, but has also a revitalizing effect on the life of the Church which suffered from the sin of one of her members.⁷⁶ Re-established or strengthened in the communion of saints, the sinner is made stronger by the exchange of spiritual goods among all the living members of the Body of Christ, whether still on pilgrimage or already in the heavenly homeland:⁷⁷

It must be recalled that . . . this reconciliation with God leads, as it were, to other reconciliations, which repair the other breaches caused by sin. The forgiven penitent is reconciled with himself in his inmost being, where he regains his innermost truth. He is reconciled with his brethren whom he has in some way offended and wounded. He is reconciled with the Church. He is reconciled with all creation.⁷⁸

Papal Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*

16. Again, as in nature a body is not formed by any haphazard grouping of members but must be constituted of organs, that is of members, that have not the same function and are arranged in due order; so for this reason above all the Church is called a body, that it is constituted by the coalescence of structurally untied parts, and that it has a variety of members reciprocally dependent. It is thus the Apostle describes the Church when he writes: "As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office: so we being many are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another." [16]

17. One must not think, however, that this ordered or "organic" structure of the body of the Church contains only hierarchical elements and with them is complete; or, as an opposite opinion holds, that it is composed only of those who enjoy charismatic gifts - though members gifted with miraculous powers will never be lacking in the Church. That those who exercise sacred power in this Body are its chief members must be maintained uncompromisingly. It is through them, by commission of the Divine Redeemer Himself, that Christ's apostolate as Teacher, King and Priest is to endure. At the same time, when the Fathers of the Church sing the praises of this Mystical Body of Christ, with its ministries, its variety of ranks, its officers, its conditions, its orders, its duties, they are thinking not only of those who have received Holy Orders, but of all those too, who, following the evangelical counsels, pass their lives either actively among men, or hidden in the silence of the cloister, or who aim at combining the active and contemplative life according to their Institute; as also of those who, though living in the world, consecrate themselves wholeheartedly to spiritual or corporal works of mercy, and of those in the state of holy matrimony. Indeed, let this be clearly understood, especially in our days, fathers and mothers of families, those who are godparents through Baptism, and in particular those members of the laity who collaborate with the ecclesiastical hierarchy in spreading the Kingdom of the Divine Redeemer occupy an honorable, if often a lowly, place in the Christian community, and even they under the impulse of God and with His help, can reach the heights of supreme holiness, which, Jesus Christ has promised, will never be wanting to the Church.

18. Now we see that the human body is given the proper means to provide for its own life, health and growth, and for that of all its members. Similarly, the Savior of mankind out of His infinite goodness has provided in a wonderful way for His Mystical Body, endowing it with the Sacraments, so that, as though by an uninterrupted series of graces, its members should be sustained from birth to death, and that generous provision might be made for the social needs of the Church. Through the waters of Baptism those who are born into this world dead in sin are not only born again and made members of the Church, but being stamped with a spiritual seal they become able and fit to receive the other Sacraments. By the chrism of Confirmation, the faithful are given added strength to protect and defend the Church, their Mother, and the faith she has given them. In the Sacrament of Penance a saving medicine is offered for the members of the Church who have fallen into sin, not only to provide for their own health, but to remove from other members of the Mystical Body all danger of contagion, or rather to afford them an incentive to virtue, and the example of a virtuous act.

19. Nor is that all; for in the Holy Eucharist the faithful are nourished and strengthened at the same banquet and by a divine, ineffable bond are united with each other and with the Divine Head of the whole Body. Finally, like a devoted mother, the Church is at the bedside of those who are sick unto death; and if it be not always God's will that by the holy anointing she restore health to the mortal body, nevertheless she administers spiritual medicine to the wounded soul and sends new citizens to heaven - to be her new advocates - who will enjoy forever the happiness of God.