



One Body, Many Parts

Begin with a prayer of gratitude for the gift of each person here. Share some of your work in reflecting on your Church life.

One body, many parts

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 out loud.

In this letter, Paul goes to great lengths to assure people that they each have a real and important place and part to play in the body. Each part of the body has its particular function, role and perception which is needed for the well-being of the whole body.

Our Community is where we find our identity in the family of believers. We discover parts of ourselves only when we interact with certain others and have the space to explore uncertainties in a supportive and uncritical environment.

Paul's teaching of the church community being like a body with Christ as the head is appropriate and very powerful. We were not created to be islands, independent of others and self-sufficient. We need others' insights and abilities to become balanced, fully-formed people. Some observations about our relationships as a body: As we are at present, it is easy to live as small independent units, connected to the centre which is the church (not necessarily to Christ), by the thin thread of attending one service or doing some work for the church. This is not necessarily community, but may be a living in isolation.

Being a part of a community means having a unique place and making a valid contribution to the body . . . it involves interaction on a deeper level.

1. Community needs COMMITMENT

This is not a popular theme these days and is usually avoided as it is perceived as robbing us of freedom by making heavy demands on us.

Commitment takes a decision – this means reflecting on our own position in the body and making a concrete decision to occupy that place, not to drift in and out of it as the mood takes us.

Commitment makes a promise – in this we are communicating to others what our commitment is. They need to know where we stand so that they can respond accordingly. The principle that God expects us to grow and flower where we are planted is very pertinent.

Commitment is seen as a living reality – there is nothing invisible about commitment, it will show itself and be felt in our everyday lives. We will be known by our ways and our works.



Sergio Milandri has a Masters in Personal Formation and has been a relationship mentor in South Africa for over 25 years. He and his wife, Elizabeth, live in Hout Bay, Cape Town, and run the Sans Pareil Retreat Centre from there. **For more material visit www.relating.com or email sergio@relating.com**

2. Community needs **SELF-GIVING**.

Self-giving means I love first – it is God's only command to us and we need to take it most seriously. In love I must take the initiative, whatever the response.

Self-giving avoids unspoken expectations – there is no better way to cheat a person of their freedom and life than to put hidden expectations on them. If a person feels loved and is able to respond freely they will do much more than is expected.

Self-giving is to reveal myself – if I am not open and true to myself, I cannot enter into a real relationship with others. I may not manipulate a relationship with hidden ideas and plans for others.

3. Community needs **INTER-DEPENDENCE**

Inter-dependence means dependence on others – this is another unpopular one since our society seeks independence and self-sufficiency. In Paul's picture of the body, the eye cannot say to the ear 'I don't need you'. God has made us to be complete only in a community body. This means we have to make ourselves vulnerable by being in relationship with and dependent on others in the body.

We need to note the difference between good and bad dependence. Bad dependence is where a person is prevented from coming to their full maturity by bonds that are oppressive and binding. Good dependence does the opposite, it sets a person free to be who they really can be.

Inter-dependence means being accountable – we are responsible to others in a free living body. How else can the parts knit together? If we find this scary, we need to see why we have this fear. A healthy accountability helps us to be free. Like the force of gravity, it gives us freedom through being connected. Paul asks us to confess our sins to one another. This can only happen in a group that is linked and accountable.

Inter-dependence means a united identity – we have a special place and identity in our community body. We have gifts and abilities valuable to all as well as needs which others can fill.

We were made for community and we will not find peace and freedom until we find our place in this body.

This has been a lot to take in and you will need more time to absorb it. For now, take one thought that has struck you and reflect on its meaning for you. What is God saying to you in it? (20 minutes)

Journal and share.

At home, read the material again and take different parts to pray and dialogue over with God. If you wish, the group could take a number of weeks to work through this part.



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