

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Nov 7th 2017

“We, though many, are one Body in Christ and individually parts of one another.” (Romans 12: 5)

These days, loud is the praise of autonomy, self-reliance, and individualism. “I don’t owe anyone a thing.” “I am the captain of my ship.” My one goal: be true to myself.” For some, the self is stripped down to a grasping force: “what I want, how I feel, it’s my right, don’t interfere.”

Having a life of my own is a blessing. We can’t force our children to adopt our work or religion. But to focus on this freedom loses touch with the deeper reality.

Paul reminds us that we belong to each other. No part stands alone. Christ boosts us out of separateness and isolation. By our own efforts, we remain scattered. A greater power lifts us into a living unity. Standing together in Christ opens our eyes. How new the world looks! For this we were born.

Capitalism has its own version of parts and whole. Adam Smith marveled at the pin factory. On the assembly line, production was divided into 18 separate operations, and one worker, instead of fashioning 20 pins a day, handled thousands. Repetitive motion may cripple body and spirit, but cheap pins flood the world. The economic whole chases after money. Unchecked, it serves the dead, not the living.

Paul charts a path for the living. Each has received gifts, so get moving: use them to serve others. Reach out to our neighbors. Slow down to listen. Share another’s joys and sorrows. Stand together against division and hate. Seek what is good. Practice hospitality. Be generous. Pray always. Forgive those who harm you. Stay close to the lowly. Each day give thanks. Don’t waste a moment on cynicism. In short, live with joy and passion.

The king has planned a great feast. Invitations are sent. The lowly heed the call and show up. They know they need help; they have learned to listen. Others are too busy to celebrate. They send in excuses and retire to their own affairs. But now is the time to wake up. We are alive. Let us come together while there is time.

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