

In the one Spirit – Conflict in the Church

I Corinthians 12:13 - 13:1

(Selected verses follow, but try to read the whole passage from a bible if you have one)

'In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many..God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior members, that there may be no dissension within the body, but (that) the members have the same care for one another.'

Notice the transition from the gifts of the Spirit to the life of the body (v. 13).

The Corinthians were a divided Church.

The Greek members prized 'wisdom' above everything else and looked down on those who they did not consider 'wise' in a classical sense.

The question of wisdom hid other deeper divisions having to do with social and economic background.

What is Paul trying to do here?

What are the things which divide us in our society and in our churches? Are we conscious of potential 'fault lines'? How would we treat a newcomer (perhaps a colleague or neighbour, or someone new to our church fellowship) who challenged our general agreement about most things?

'In the one Spirit, we were all baptised into one body.'

Life in the Spirit asks far more of us than superficial agreement.

The One Spirit is the all embracing love of Christ and his presence in our midst.

What does it feel like to be someone who knows they are held in contempt or deemed unimportant or unnecessary to the life of the Church?

Does this make us apprehensive or fearful about our own standing in a group, or in the workplace? Or does it reveal guilt and anxiety about how we got to where we are, perhaps at someone else's expense?

What effect might a greater sensitivity to each other's real situation have on us as individuals? On our life of community? On the life of the wider Church?

'If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.'

Consider what it means to 'speak in the tongues of angels but have no love'.

Love is the essential component for real communication. This suggests that communication is more than simply getting my ideas or point of view across, or winning an argument. Communication has something in common with getting into someone else's pain. It is therefore in a certain sense 'physical'. It also has to do with recognition of something held in common – the life of the Spirit.

Does this suggest a different kind of love for life in community than that which occurs between 2 friends or even between lovers?

Can the life of Christian community be thought of as a kind of marriage? The foretaste of the ultimate Kingdom of Heaven?

Is there anything you can do in your own community, whether it is a neighbourhood, or work context, or the church you go to, to promote loving communication?