

Communion: Unity in Diversity

By

Father Fred Ball

Recently we celebrated the Feast of Saint Hilary of Poitiers, an early bishop who was a leader in the Trinitarian debates of the fourth century AD. Specifically, Hilary challenged the teachings of Arius, a priest who insisted that Christ was not "of one being with the Father", as we confess in the Creed each week. Indeed, according to Arius, "there was a time when the Son was not." The First Council of Nicaea (AD 325) condemned the doctrines of Arius and gave us the first form of the Nicene Creed.



Aside from saying the "right thing" when we confess our faith at Mass, what is the significance of all this for day-to-day life in the Ecumenical Catholic Communion? Our ecclesiology — our understanding of the nature of the Church — is very much shaped by our understanding of the Trinity.

The eternal, communal relationship of the divine persons with each other becomes the model and the ground of our communion with one another as Christian people. We are invited to participate in the divine life. We enjoy the communion of God and humanity which has been restored through Christ. Created, male and female, in the image of God, we live into our created nature by being in communion with God and one another, just as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are in eternal communion with one another.

One of the gifts of this vision of Church, grounded in the Holy Trinity, is the notion of "unity in difference". The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit are distinct persons, yet are "of one being" with one another. **Unity** is not based in **identity** (i.e., "sameness"). In the same way, the Church finds its unity not in having members who are identical to one another in any sense. It's not about looking alike, behaving alike, or believing all the same things. Rather, ***we find our unity in relationship to God in Christ.***

We are male and female, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, ethnically diverse, gay and straight. We are single, married, and partnered. Our community includes those who love traditional Catholic worship forms and those who are perfectly at home with more contemporary practices. We welcome cradle Catholics and those whose first experience of actually participating in the Catholic Mass was at one of our ECC faith communities. All of these differences enrich our faith community and none of them hinders our unity, for we are all one in Christ Jesus (cf. Galatians 3:28).

The doctrine of the Trinity calls us to live out our being as Church in communion with one another, in communion with other churches, and in communion with God. It invites us to rejoice in our unity-in-diversity. It invites us to a mutuality of life-giving ministry, each of us sharing our gifts and living out the call of God in our lives according to the gifts and leading of the Holy Spirit. What a beautiful gift to the Church!



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