



**Carstairs-Bancroft United Church**  
July 28, 2021  
**DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT**  
**DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**  
**By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces**



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Yesterday we could hear that we have a Divine Support as we meet life's challenges. Today's Our Daily Bread meditation reminds us of the other side of the coin: the human companionship we are granted as we accept God's call to become **"a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession..."** (1 Peter 2:9)

In my experience, without the Spirit of God, we tend to watch out just for ourselves, to seek revenge when others hurt us, to hoard instead of sharing. But the Almighty haven't envisioned us to live that way. The perfect concord among the Persons of the Holy Trinity is the model we are called to follow. As Apostle Paul put it: **"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."** (Philippians 2:3-4)

To achieve this attitude, we need to recognize that our way of separation from God and others are hurtful and not beneficial at all. By putting our trust in the Holy One's providence, we can try what happens when we act in love and compassion, just as Jesus showed us to do.

Paul applies an even stronger metaphor: the human body, with its different parts and organs, but living together as one person. For example, if we have a headache, or any other aches, the whole individual feels terrible. A severe migraine might cause nausea as well, and if a wound gets infected, the fever it triggers spreads throughout the whole body.

But how can we – so different from one another – live in that harmony and unity? How can we synchronize our varied viewpoints and comfort levels? Paul gave a hint about that in his letter to the Philippians: **"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit..."** (Philippians 2:1)

So, do we take any encouragement from **"being united with Christ"** through our Baptism? Do we find **"comfort from his love"**? We may receive these gifts when we "share in the Spirit", who enables us to focus on the providence and abundance of God, not on our scarcity; who makes us capable of feeling each other's pain or fears; who inspires us to act in love and compassion instead of selfish ambition.

As I can see, we are not able to perform this great symphony of unity without the Spirit of God. But because the Holy One invites us into this 'orchestra', with willingness to 'practice' and to be part of this 'body', we can become "a people of God". We are encouraged to ask for the gift of the Spirit as Jesus said: **"If you then ... know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"** (Luke 11:13)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



## The Greatest Symphony

*We were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body.*

1 Corinthians 12:13

### READ 1 Corinthians 12:12–20

When BBC Music Magazine asked one hundred fifty-one of the world's leading conductors to list twenty of what they believed to be the greatest symphonies ever written, Beethoven's Third, Eroica, came out on top. The work, whose title means "heroic," was written during the turmoil of the French Revolution. But it also came out of Beethoven's own struggle as he slowly lost his hearing. The music evokes extreme swings of emotion that express what it means to be human and alive while facing challenges. Through wild swings of happiness, sadness, and eventual triumph Beethoven's Third Symphony is regarded as a timeless tribute to the human spirit.

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians deserves our attention for similar reasons. Through inspired words rather than musical scores, it rises in blessing (1:4–9), falls in the sadness of soul-crushing conflict (11:17–22), and rises again in the unison of gifted people working together for one another and for the glory of God (12:6–7).

The difference is that here we see the triumph of our human spirit as a tribute to the Spirit of God. As Paul urges us to experience together the inexpressible love of Christ, he helps us see ourselves as called together by our Father, led by His Son, and inspired by His Spirit—not for noise, but for our contribution to the greatest symphony of all. – By **Mart DeHaan**

#### REFLECT & PRAY

**Father, please enable me to see what I can be with others, with my eyes on Your Son, with reliance on Your Spirit, with a growing awareness of what You can do with a noisemaker like me. Amen.**

Where do you hear the dissonance of conflict in your own life? Where do you see the symphonic harmonies of love?

#### SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The Greek word *ekklesia*, translated "church," means "an assembly," a "called-out people" gathered together. The word is used to describe "a people of God" (1 Peter 2:9–10). Paul used many different metaphors to describe the church, including God's family (Ephesians 2:19; 3:15; 1 Timothy 3:15), God's flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2), and the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22–32). But "the body of Christ" is Paul's favorite (Romans 12:4–5; 1 Corinthians 6:15; 10:17; Ephesians 1:22–23; 4:4, 12; 5:23, 30; Colossians 1:18, 24).

The church at Corinth was a divided congregation. Some believers elevated certain ecstatic gifts (for example, speaking in unknown tongues) above others, believing that unless one possessed these, one wasn't part of the church. Paul refuted this error in 1 Corinthians 12–14. He used the body metaphor to promote unity and harmony. The church, like the human body, is diverse, but all parts must function as one. – By **K. T. Sim**

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