May 16 & 17, 2015 Fr. Andy Szebenyi, SJ

7th Sunday of Easter All Saints Parish, Syr. NY

On Unity

My dear Brothers and Sisters. We heard these words right here, just a few minutes ago: ***Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed, saying; “Holy Father keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one.”***

Of course we may ask: ‘What this oneness really means?’ Is it unity in diversity, or unity in sameness? What does all this mean? You see, it is so easy to proclaim words without really grasp their meaning. And then the words come and go, and I may find myself that I did not move at all. So really what does it mean in the most practical and real terms that we are one in Jesus’ name? Is it a unity in diversity, or a unity of being the same?

What does St. Paul say? He compares the Body of Christ, the Church, to the human body, the way God created us and said that it is good. Not everyone is the head, or the heart, or the senses, and the senses are not the same. He spoke about unity as being of joining forces in a functional diversity. Each one of us can do something good that is special, and so together in the name of Jesus we can do it all. Therefore, our oneness is not the unity of being the same, but it means a unity in diversity. We look around and find that other people do many good things, different from what we can do. Our response should then be love and respect toward them, and a joyful feeling of satisfaction, because we can do so much together.

Or let us see what God’s created world has to say about oneness? As we look around we find that in a constantly changing and unfolding world, placing before us ever new challenges, unity in diversity means survival, while just being the same will not be able to provide survival in the ever changing and new circumstances. In biology we express this by using the word variation. Without variation there is no survival in an ever changing world.

So my Sisters and Brothers, in every Eucharistic celebration, we pray after the Our Father: “Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant us peace and unity in accordance to your will.” I ask myself: ‘How can I foster this peace and unity in my life?’ I was thinking about the aim and desire of our ecumenical efforts after the second Vatican Council. I ask myself, what can I do for unity among all other Christians who are not Catholic, but are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. So I decided to be open to dialog as much as my opportunities allow it. In the meanwhile, every time I drive before any church I make the sign of the cross and give my blessing to all who come to this church to worship God.

You know, my Sisters and Brothers, I was really most upset when I came across the document *Dominus Iesus*, published not so very long ago by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which stated that all other denominations who are not Catholic Christians, are in their faith intrinsically deficient. I got really upset. Because after all, how does one initiate a dialog with such an introduction. Through a life-long experience I have learned how to deal with my emotions when I get really upset. Instead of fuming and banging on the table, and saying something bad, I write a Limerick; (a clean one, of course). I still remember what I wrote reading the document *Dominus Iesus*. Here it is:

There was a strange guy called Rat

Blank Blank – a terrible brat.

He wore a purple dress

And caused the Church distress

Under a cardinal’s hat.

Then I felt better, and remained steadfast in making the sign of the cross and give a blessing to all baptized Christians whenever and wherever we meet.

My dear Sisters and Brothers let us respond to all encounters with *unity in diversity* with great respect, love, and joyful embrace. Amen.