

Ecclesial Communion: Surrendering to God's Action

The culture in which we live constantly drives us to focus on ourselves (our abilities, gifts, efforts, measuring up, contributions etc . . .), and hence to see others as competition. One fruit of this focus on ourselves is the conviction that the Church's unity (ecclesial communion) or even the unity that we experience in our communities, is the fruit of our effort. While the building of community does require human effort, that effort is best offered when offered *in gratitude for* or *in response to* the communion in which God has established us by our Baptism.

Ecclesial communion (and hence community) is NOT the fruit of our effort, but is rather the fruit of God's action in our lives. GOD sews us into communion; GOD builds us into communion; GOD nourishes us into communion. St. Paul reveals that, essentially, God *loves us into communion* through the action of the Holy Spirit when he observes that "the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us." (Romans 5. 5)

The more we surrender to God's life-giving action in the Spirit and the less we care about our own abilities, efforts, or projects, the more we *discover ourselves to BE* that communion for which we long. We do not need to *work furiously to BECOME* united. God has already done that work in us!

Surrendering to the unifying action of the Holy Spirit enables us to be ourselves in simplicity and freedom, for God's gaze and voice becomes the most important one in our lives. The more freely we are able to be ourselves, the more freely we are able to reach out to others and share the gifts with which God has gifted each one of us. No longer will we hide our gifts away out of fear of being targeted by jealousy; no longer will we compare ourselves to one another. Surrendering to the unifying action of the Holy Spirit enables us **focus on the Lord Jesus'** goodness to us and to pay that goodness forward through our generous service to others.

To Begin our approach to Ecclesial Communion in our generous service to others *to put the cart before the horse*, placing us at risk of building community in a narcissistic way. The Gospel invites us to *receive the gift* of love and unity *that has been poured forth into our hearts*. In this way, our generous service to others can truly be a sign of Jesus' own love and life.