

## QUESTION: What is the fabric? (14.4.2024)

Conversations about the direction of the Troika in the next period brought us to three images to which our community can be compared: the fleet, the ecosystem and the body. The fleet needs good navigation so that the individual ships don't get lost, the ecosystem needs a healthy balance so that all parts of it thrive, the body needs revitalizing blood and sap to flow through it. Adam expressed all of this in the word " fabric", which connects everything in a healthy way through the flow of nutrients. According to God's Word, what is this fabric in the church?

*Ephesians 4,1-16 Through whom all the body, being rightly formed and united together, by the full working of every part, is increased to the building up of itself in love.*

### 1. **In love** (Ephesians 4,2)

A church (community) can have a wonderfully organized way of functioning. Nice environment, quality programs, sophisticated PR. But if we fail in our character, it still won't lead to anything.

The Apostle Paul emphasizes three expressions of love: humility, gentleness, and patience. Humility leads us to give honor to others by recognizing their worth in God, rather than striving for esteem for ourselves. It keeps us from being friends only with those who are likeable to us and "return" the dose of respect we desire. Moderation, in turn, protects us from extreme, radical attitudes and judgment of others. This does not mean lukewarm attitudes at all, but rather a zealous pursuit of Christ's way of dealing with other people. Patience helps us to persevere and endure even those who provoke us in the long run. The Church is more than a social club, so we have reason to strive for the bond of peace built by these three expressions of love.

### 2. **Christ the Head** (Ephesians 4,3-6)

The Church is not a human project, it comes from God and has received the code of unity in its DNA. One Spirit connects us and gives us the experience of one body. One Lord, through one and the same baptism affirming one and the same faith, gives us one common hope that determines where we are headed. One God and Father of all unites us into one family.

Yet unity is not a given, but something to be fervently pursued. When we strive for unity, we should spare no effort. But we are to create unity proactively for the benefit of the whole with urgency and with the full involvement of will, emotion, reason and strength. There is no place for rivalry, comparison, jealousy, feelings of envy. For the strength of each individual and group in our church is derived from the strength and unity of the whole.

### 3. **The task that belongs to** (Ephesians 4,7-12)

Unity certainly does not mean uniformity. Christ "captured the powers" to release diverse power for his people to fulfill God's vision. He has distributed diverse gifts (more than the 5 Paul mentions) that are more than just abilities, skills, or talents. They are power released to us so that we can each participate in building up the body of Christ here on earth in our own distinctive way.

It is good to know your gift, but more important than what gift you have (compared to others) is whether you are using it to fulfill God's vision. It is not a matter of prestige, but of humble service to God.

### 4. **It grows and builds to maturity** (Ephesians 4,13-16)

We are each responsible for our own personal growth, and at the same time we cannot grow on our own without others (Eph. 3:17-19). We cannot do without the "animating connection of the whole body." We are to support one another to grow in knowledge (study of Christ and his word), in faith (practice, faith without works is dead), and in maturity, which is manifested by a balance of truth and love in our relationships with one another.

Transformed character, striving for unity, serving one another with diverse gifts, and supporting one another in growth creates the "fabric" through which the nutrients flow - the animating words and power to fulfill God's dream - a new humanity, a new kind of community according to the measure of Christ's fullness.

God is looking at us (Trinity) through the vision of this dream. He sees more than what is now and what we see. He sees more than those who are here today. The Trinity is not just what is "inside" the life of the Trinity - God longs for us to be His presence here on earth, as a whole and as individuals everywhere we live, work and spend our leisure time. To be his influence here on earth. That we would be the kingdom of God that has come, is coming, and will come. God sees others coming to the head - Christ, and becoming part of the body (fleet, ecosystem). Let us be ready, the kingdom of God is coming.

Amen