

## **Their Lord and Ours**

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Ecumenical Sunday)

January 19, 2020

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“...with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” This is St. Paul’s greeting in his First Letter to the Corinthians that we heard in our second reading today. While not intentional, this line speaks to the week that we are currently in, the week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which happens each year from January 18-25. While not an official liturgical feast, today is known as ‘ecumenical Sunday.’ I think it is important to call attention to it.

For much of the first millennium, Christians were by and large united. Following the teachings of the apostles and the the early church councils, there was a basic understanding of what being a Church community meant. It was in the second millennium that divisions within Christianity became more noticeable, namely in 1054 with the Great Schism between the Eastern and Western Churches and then again in 1517 with the Protestant Reformation. While differences of thought and practice are only natural over time, what isn’t natural is the ways that Christians have reached the point of ignoring or belittling each other for centuries. It was only within the past century that the situation has gotten better. Roman Catholics joined the ecumenical movement in the 1960s at Vatican II. There is still more work to be done, though.

One of the key realizations for all Christians to recognize, regardless of denomination, is that we all call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. While we might interpret the Christian message differently (perhaps some more accurately than others), we are all invoking the same savior,

the same Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. St. Paul even freely calls Jesus ‘their Lord and ours’ in his letter to the Corinthians, implying that multiple groups can follow him.

Throughout history, much damage has been done to Christian unity by certain groups claiming exclusive ownership over Jesus Christ. When this happens, Jesus’ name becomes a weapon to attack others for being wrong, heretical, or sinful. This is not what Jesus’ holy name is for. His holy name is for the forgiveness of sins and the redemption of the world. The way back to Christian unity is to acknowledge that all of us are in need of conversion and none of us perfectly follows Jesus. As the 1991 document *For the Conversion of the Churches*, states, “a genuine *convergence* between the churches can happen only if all churches, individually and together, turn themselves anew to their Lord Jesus Christ in *conversion*.”

*This week of prayer for Christian Unity challenges Christians, individually and denominationally, to see the Lord Jesus Christ not just as our Lord, but ‘their’ Lord also.*

Can I share my Lord with others?

The theme of the 2020 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is ‘They showed us unusual kindness.’ This is a reference from the Acts of the Apostles 28:2, when Paul and his companions found themselves shipwrecked on the island of Malta and discovered the people of the island to be extremely kind to them. During this week, let us pray that we may advance the cause of Christian unity by starting with showing unusual kindness to all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.