

Sometime in 1961, the construction of the notorious Berlin Wall commenced. The high wall divided the German nation for twenty-eight years. It became a symbol of oppression and control. When one of our nation's former presidents, Ronald Reagan, visited the Berlin Wall while in Germany he famously called upon the leader of the Soviet Union "to tear down this wall".

Walls create barriers.

The wall was demolished in 1989. The tearing down of the wall served as a sign of reconciliation and unity. East and West Germany had become one after years of separation.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul makes reference to a wall. "He (Christ) broke down the dividing wall of enmity".

The great division in humanity at the time of Our Lord's appearance was the division between Jew and Gentiles. Jews possessed the Law given to Moses on Mount Sinai, whereas the Gentiles did not.

Many biblical scholars are of the view the wall St. Paul speaks of is a reference to a partition in the Temple of Jerusalem, which separated the court of the Gentiles from the court of the Jews. Gentiles were given no access to the inner court which was reserved exclusively for the Chosen People. Indeed, on the wall were signs, forbidding under pain of death, any foreigner trespassing.

One of the important themes in Paul's writing is reconciliation. Walls are an obstacle to peace. In his person, Jesus broke down the dividing walls of suspicion and hatred. Jesus came to us in a spirit of reconciliation. Clearly, there is great safety and strength in unity. Jews and Gentiles have been brought together, and formed a new, holy community, the Body of Christ.

What has Christ achieved?

He has bestowed peace between Jew and foreigner, the Old and New covenant and between all erstwhile sinners who now live in faith.

Today, unfortunately, many walls have been constructed in our Western culture. Walls can be found in our legislatures, classrooms, homes, neighborhoods, places of work and, sad to say, our churches. To build walls of division between human beings is to rise up against God, who is Unity, a Trinity of Persons.

When, a few year ago, Pope Francis was asked about the building of walls on America's borders, he replied, "A Christian is called upon to build bridges and not walls.

In his commentary on today's second reading, (Eph. 2:13-18), William Barclay, biblical scholar and Presbyterian minister, shares the following story"

*"In France some soldiers with their sergeant brought the body of a dead comrade to a French cemetery to have their friend buried there. The priest told them gently that it was a Roman Catholic cemetery, and he was bound to ask if their comrade had been a baptized adherent of the Roman Catholic Church. They said they did not know. The priest said he was very sorry, but, if that was the case, he could not permit burial in his own churchyard. So the soldiers took their comrade sadly and buried him just outside the*

*fence of the churchyard. The next day they came back to see that the grave was all right, and to their astonishment could not find it. They knew that it was only six feet from the fence of the burying ground, but search as they might they could find no trace of the freshly dug soil. As they were about to leave in perplexed bewilderment the priest came up.. He told them that his heart had been troubled because of his refusal to allow their dead comrade to be buried in the churchyard; so he told them that early in the morning he had risen from his bed, and with his own hands he had moved the fence to include the body of the soldier who had died for France”.*

Doctor Barclay observes, “This is what love can do. The rules and regulations put up the fence; but love moved it. Jesus removed the fences between man and man because he abolished all religion that is founded on rules and regulations, and brought to men a religion whose foundation is love”

In these turbulent times, we are called to be instruments of God’s peace. Where there is hatred, we must be agents of love, and where there is injury, pardon.

Let us be of service on a demolition team. Let us destroy all walls that divide us and others.. Jesus is counting on us!