

Homily: 3rd Sunday: Cycle C: 2016: Neh 8: 2-4a, 5-6, 8-10; Ps 19; 1 Corth 12: 12-30; Lk
1: 1-4; 4: 14-21

“We are all in this together”

St. Paul today talks about the concept of the Church as the “Mystical Body of Christ”, meaning we all have a distinct role to play in the Church just as each part of our physical body has an important and unique role to play for the whole body to function well. This is an important concept to grasp in order to grow in holiness on a daily basis. We are truly all in this together; there is to be no simply “me and Jesus” individualistic spirituality in the Church - we have to be concerned about the spiritual well-being of everyone. **How can we do this in a practical way, as it can seem like an abstraction?** I will propose three ways today to help bring this concept of the “Mystical Body” into our spiritual lives in a deeper way.

1. St. Paul tells us today, *“If one part (of the Mystical Body of the Church) suffers, all parts suffer with it.”* This is one of the hidden spiritual gifts of life that we sometimes allow to go by the wayside or even waste. As Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said, *“there is nothing worst than wasted suffering.”* What am I getting at? Well, that we need to take our daily crosses: our sufferings, be they physical, mental, emotional or spiritual and consciously offer them not only for our own purification and deeper conversion of heart, but for the conversion of others. **How do we do this?** First by making **a morning offering** each day to the Lord of **everything** we will experience that day, both pleasant and unpleasant, in union with Jesus on the Cross and with all the Masses (the renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross) throughout the world in company with our Blessed Mother and all the angels and saints. It takes a minute - but we need to get in the habit of doing it FIRST thing in the morning. Then throughout the day to ask the Holy Spirit to help us to get into the habit of consciously uniting the sufferings we experience, with Jesus, for the sake of the Mystical Body of the Church. Over time we will break out of the fallen human nature habit of complaining about our sufferings, telling others about them to try to get a little ounce of sympathy, and often feeling sorry for ourselves. Instead we will offer them consciously to the Lord, and He will help us to grow in holiness by embracing the unique Cross He

daily sends us or permits us to go through in love for our own sanctification and the sanctification of others! **What a noble endeavor.** Since the March for Life was on Friday of this past week, we as a Church and a nation recall the infamous Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision that sadly legalized abortion in our country in 1973, an evil that has cost some 58 million lives in the past 40 years. It truly boggles the mind, but we need to remember never to give up the good fight for the pro-life cause; and the best way spiritually we can do our part to help bring about the victory for Life someday, hopefully soon, is to make it one of our daily intentions, when we offer our sufferings, daily duties and prayers up to the Lord for the good of the Mystical Body. And pray for the conversion of all those who support abortion in our country and world, and for repentance and healing for those who have been involved in this evil in any way. We are all in this together.

2. A second way we can help the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, on a daily basis is **to offer our daily temptations for the spiritual good of others.** What are you talking about, Father? Well, this is a trick of the spiritual life that very few Catholics know about in my experience as a priest over almost 16 years. As you know, all too well, all of us are tempted in different ways to choose evil disguised as good - instead of the actual good which is God's will - on a frequent basis. We are all tempted toward various sins, but one type usually stands out. All of us have a ***pre-dominant fault***, as the great spiritual writers put it (e.g., see Fr. Reginald Garrigou La-Grange's classic work *The 3 Ages of the Interior Life*, TAN books), based on one of the **seven capital or root sins (the 7 deadly sins)**. Those are: ***pride, anger, lust, gluttony, envy, sloth and greed.*** Think and pray about that over the next week- which one of the capital sins do you have the greatest weakness toward? Once we recognize that, we can take the spiritual steps to overcome our pre-dominant fault or at least to keep it in check - it is an exercise in humility since God's strength is made perfect when we acknowledge our weakness without Him. The evil one knows our pre-dominant fault, so he tries to work on us. However, **we need to call to mind frequently that we can over time, with much patience, perseverance, and acts of humility on our part, not only**

counter our pre-dominant fault and our tendency toward sin in general by resisting the evil one and our fallen nature with the help of God's grace and the Sacraments, but we can also offer the temptations when we become aware of them, for the conversion of others in the Mystical Body of Christ.

For example, if you are being tempted against the virtue of patience (the capital sin of anger), once you become aware of it, instead of giving into it which the devil wants you to do, offer it for the conversion of some soul in the world at that moment who is lashing out or full of rage. Then you are beating the devil at his own game, instead of giving into a sin of anger, you are offering your struggle for the conversion of some other soul, and so the end result spiritually is you are helping someone else to resist sin in God, since we are all connected in the Mystical Body of Christ, and you yourself are growing in holiness. **It really does work.** The devil wants to bring us down spiritually and when we use his tricks against him, in God, he leaves - but will look for another time to trip us up☺.

3. A final way we can help the Mystical Body of Christ to grow in holiness is to **offer our daily prayers and duties** for the good of the Church and the world at large. As I said at the beginning of this homily, our spiritual life cannot simply be, "me and Jesus." We are in this together. In our prayers we need to always remember to pray for others and not just our own spiritual wants and needs. We are part of **the family of God** and must make our contribution to building up the Mystical Body in love. We are all in this together - that is also why God and the Church requires us to go to the Sacrament of Confession to the priest (see *John 20:20-22*), for the priest in his role as spiritual shepherd represents both God and the Mystical Body, the Church, since when we sin, whether we realize it or not, we do harm to both the love of God and love of neighbor in our hearts and lives in a myriad of ways. During this Jubilee Year of Divine Mercy, Pope Francis reminds us that we need to be reconciled regularly to both God and neighbor, and the Sacrament of Confession is the special place for this to occur, hence fulfilling the two-fold great commandment to love both God and neighbor. God bless you.