

7th Sunday of Easter
May 16, 2010
“United We Stand, Divided We Fall ...”

An age-old principle that applies to just about every human enterprise, when we stop and think about it.

Every president of our country on his inauguration day has in some way or other tried to rally us Americans into a unity of purpose and direction.

Oh, he knows there will always be some political differences.

But he calls us to rise above them for the sake of the common good of the USA.

In our American history, we used to be better at that than we are today.

I would say that from the 1950's and before, partisan differences would become very manifest around election times - just as they are currently as we get ready for primary elections this Tuesday.

But after the elections, back in the old days, people, by and large, would settle down and support whoever got elected, and we were all proud to be Americans.

But since the 1960's this national unity here in our country shows itself only when a major tragedy hits us, like a severe storm, a natural disaster, or September 11, 2001.

Otherwise we have let ourselves become a severely polarized people.

And that's due to a number of reasons:

The media has made politics a spectator sport,

Corruption among public figures has become more exposed than ever before,

And candidates are voted into office more on image than on substance.

There's also the influence of the respective political party platforms.

All in all, it leaves us a nation more divided than united than ever before.

Our famous American patriot, Ben Franklin, is well-remembered for saying: “If we don't hang together, we'll surely be hung separately.”

Our Lord, Jesus, said: “Whoever is not with me, is against me.”

In today's Gospel, Jesus prays for unity in this young Church He is founding.

He knows full well the weaknesses of our human nature.

He knows full well how disciples will disagree, so much so that they eventually will split up and form their own denominations.

And hence, we have all the flavors of Christianity that are in the world today.

But we still hear Jesus praying for us to be unified.

We still hear Him wanting us to stand united lest divided, we fall.

Lots of mainline Christian denominations today are being torn apart over marriage issues, same-sex unions, ordination gender issues, and the pro-life causes.

Our Catholic Church is no exception.

Our Church has never been more polarized in modern time than it is now.

Younger clergy tend to be tightly conservative.

Older and experienced clergy are decried as out-of-touch ancient liberals tied to the '60's, '70's, and '80's, not really in tune with where the people are living life today.

Look at the popularity of EWTN.

Even Pope Benedict said last week on his way to Portugal, that the major enemies of the Church are within, not outside.

So Jesus' prayer for unity in today's Gospel is indeed so very, very timely.

With doctrinal differences more prominent than ever in recent times, and with church and school mergings and closings to stir up the people even more, we just must not let go of Our Lord's earnest call for unity, for truly, "united we stand, but divided we fall!"

Thank you and God bless you.