

Very Importantly: the Holy Spirit Has Given Us His Gifts
Sermon based on 1 Corinthians 12:3-7
Saint Mark's, Watertown
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"In the last days," God says, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people." Pentecost was the fulfillment of that prophecy—and really, it continues today among us Christians! Amen.

God's Word for our special consideration, on this Festival of the Arrival of God the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, is the Apostle Paul's inspired commentary in First Corinthians, chapter twelve, verses three through seven:

I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Introduction: E Pluribus Unum Describes the USA & the HCC

Dear fellow Christians—who, by the power of God the Holy Spirit, confess together that Jesus is Lord:

E pluribus unum (pronounced correctly), *E pluribus unum* (pronounced traditionally)—do you recognize those words? – They're Latin, of course. But they mean something to us English-speaking Americans.... The words are a national motto for us. Ladies, if you happen to have any coins in your purse, gentlemen, if you happen to have any coins in your pocket, that's where you'd likely find these words. *E pluribus unum* – I'm told – is found on most coinage minted in the United States.

Do you know what those words mean? ...*E pluribus* – “out of the many” – *unum* – “one”. “Out of the many: one.” And to what does that refer? ...Well, it refers to the relationship between the states in the USA and the nation of the USA. “Out of the many” states: “one” nation. It recognizes both the distinction among our fifty states, and our unity as a nation.

E pluribus unum: “out of the many, one”—today we're going to find out that motto could even better be applied to the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints, that group of all souls whom the Holy Spirit has drawn to trust in Christ as Savior. We'll discover that by the power of the Holy Spirit, there's one very important gift we Christians all share. And by the working of the Holy Spirit, different gifts are given to each of us Christians—but we end up sharing those, as well.

**Part One: Invisibly, the Holy Spirit Causes
All Christians to Confess that Jesus Is Lord**

In God's Word to us today, the Apostle Paul is writing his first letter to Christians in Corinth, Greece. It's about a quarter century after the events of the first Pentecost. And more or less, Paul applies those events here—to the Corinthian Christians, and to us Christians.

Paul's first words describe the invisible work of the Holy Spirit on behalf of all Christians. He writes: *I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*

No one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed." Think of those words, "Jesus be cursed." Aren't those shocking words! That the very source of our lives, that the only hope for our eternal life, that He be cursed—that's an absolutely shocking statement.

But what's more shocking is when we realize that we entered into this world saying that. We entered into this world as sworn enemies of Jesus. The Bible says to us: *Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.* We entered this world shaking our fists at God. We cursed God, the source of every blessing. We entered this world hating God, resenting his command that we live according to his will. How could it have been any different, when we carried in our flesh the sin we inherited from Adam and Eve?

(I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed,") – like that – *...and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.* And wonder of wonders! you and I do gladly say, "Jesus is Lord!" You said it by your actions, when you came to worship today: "Jesus is Lord!" You said it with me in the Confession of Faith moments ago: "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ my Lord (!) or come to him." Really, you say it with your entire being; it's never far from your thoughts that: "Jesus Christ is Lord!"

And how did you come to say that? *No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.* God the Holy Spirit convinced you that Jesus Christ is Lord-- ...one hundred percent, totally, completely he did it, without your help, without your effort, and without your choice.

And how did the Holy Spirit manage that? – Oh, this is sooo important! – The Holy Spirit speaks by the Scriptures and the Sacraments. The Bible says: *The Holy Scriptures are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus; all Scripture is God-breathed*—inspired by God the Holy Spirit. That's how the Holy Spirit teaches you to say, "Jesus is Lord"—not by your working and not by your relaxing, not by television and not by video games, but by the Scriptures and the Sacraments.

So, if you're not baptized, you've got to get baptized—and do it very soon. If you are baptized, you will treasure your baptism. If you're not yet qualified to receive the Lord's Supper, get qualified to receive the Lord's Supper—and do it very soon. If you are qualified to receive Holy Communion, do that regularly—not just a few times a year either, but frequently. You also need to hear God's Word by getting to church the one-one hundred sixty-eighth of the week which that requires—that would be the hour of worship. You also need to read God's Word—at least a quite a little bit most days.

You see, there are no not-hearing-and-not-reading, not-connected-to-God's-Word Christians. *No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit!*

Part Two: Visibly, the Holy Spirit Enables Each Christian to Serve Jesus by Serving Others

That's the *unum* part. *E pluribus unum*—Out of us many, that's the *one* thing we share: confidence in Jesus Christ, given by God the Holy Spirit, in the Scriptures and Sacraments. Now listen to the *pluribus* part—the *many* different gifts the Holy Spirit has given diversely to each of us. And listen to the way we've got to use them.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Two things to notice there....

First of all, notice the nice emphasis on Father, Son, and Spirit working together. These *gifts, service, and working* are from the *Spirit*, the third person of the Trinity, the *Lord*, the second person of the Trinity, and *God*, the first person of the Trinity.

Secondly, consider the implications of that. ...Let's say you're a very gifted individual. You absolutely cannot brag about that. In fact, you must feel very humbled, because it was the same Spirit who gave you your gifts as gave your sisters and brothers in Christ their gifts. ...Or let's say that you don't feel very special or gifted. You absolutely cannot get down on yourself. In fact, you ought to feel very honored, because it was the same Spirit who gave you your gifts as gave your sisters and brothers in Christ their gifts.

And one final thing Paul says: ***Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*** Isn't that interesting?!

Two things there, as well....

First of all, what should we make of those words: *the manifestation of the Spirit*? Well, it isn't as hard as it sounds, and it's actually very beautiful. God the Holy Spirit is a Spirit. That means he is invisible. But he proves he is there – he makes himself visible; he *manifests* himself – through you. When you faithfully employ the abilities he has given you, you are demonstrating the invisible Spirit visibly to the entire world. Isn't that wonderful?

Secondly: (*to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given*) ...*for the common good.* The Holy Spirit did not give you your abilities for you to use on you. No! The Holy Spirit gave you your abilities for you to use on others. Six quick examples of that....

One: let's say the Spirit has given you a very good mind. He didn't do that for you to make yourself rich, or for you to feel superior to others. No! The Spirit intends for you to use that bright mind of yours to benefit other people by the work that you do.

Two: let's say the Spirit has instead blessed you with one of those sweet personalities. He didn't do that for you to surround yourself with friends, so that you feel good about yourself. No! The Spirit intends for you to use that winsome personality of yours to influence others toward Christ.

Three: let's say the Holy Spirit has given you the gifts for leadership; you're one of those people who can take responsibility for a task and persuade others to work with you toward that goal. The Spirit didn't give you that so that you'd feel good about yourself because others look up to you. No! He intends for you to lead others to accomplish His purposes.

Four: let's say the Spirit has blessed you with organizational ability; you know, step by step, how to get things done. He didn't give you that so that you'd get your own work done. No! He gave you that so that you would get His work done. So, do it!

Five: let's say the Holy Spirit has given you a certain amount of money. And folks, the Holy Spirit has given us a certain amount of money, so everybody should be listening to this. The Bible says: *God has given you the ability to produce wealth.* Well, he didn't give you and me our money just to pay the bills and then entertain ourselves. No! He intends us to serve Him with our money. So, can we really spend more on our eating out and going to the movies and cable bill and computer hook-up and motel stay and vacation and upgrade to our car and our house—than we spend on God?

Six: let's say the Holy Spirit has given you a certain amount of time. And folks, the Holy Spirit has given us a certain amount of time, so everybody should be listening to this. The Bible says: *My times are in your hands, O Lord.* Well, he didn't give you and me and our time just to work or to study and then to entertain ourselves. No! He intends us to serve Him with our time.

Conclusion: E Pluribus Unum Describes the HCC Better Than the USA

I'm confident you get my point. It's not my point; it's God's point. Very importantly, God the Holy Spirit has given us his gifts. Invisibly, he causes all Christians to confess that Jesus is Lord. Visibly, he enables each Christian to serve Jesus by serving others.

So, even more than the United States of America, we within the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints, are *E pluribus unum*—"out of the many: one." Although we are *many* souls – and even demonstrate diverse gifts – we share *one* Jesus. And especially on the Festival of Pentecost, we have one Holy Spirit to thank for all that! Amen.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And really, those virtues continue today among us Christians! Amen.