

Solipsism, some of you have heard the word before, some of you have not. I first heard the word in a philosophy class, I found myself fascinated by the idea that stood behind it. There is only I. All of you are not at all. Everything that I see and touch and experience happens only in my mind. Life even the whole creation is but a dream that I experience. There is only I.

If I believed it, you would call me crazy. If I lived and acted out the fantasy that you are not, but are only in my mind, you would see that I received treatment. You know that you are.

Though I do not subscribe to the theory, I realize how often I believe and act as if truth is what is seen by these eyes and only these eyes. Think about yourself at this minute, from where you sit you see this room, this space. You see me. Each of you. What you see is true, real. But not one of you is seeing exactly the same thing as any other one of you at this minute. The heads in the pew in front of you are not the same, the shadows made by the lights and appears not quite the same for any two of you, even as you look at me some see me more from this side, some more from that. Who sees things as they really are? Why each of you. Or maybe all of you taken together, but no one of you.

Listen to the sounds at this moment, my voice, for some amplified, for some up close direct, sounds of children or people shifting their position. As with sight the sounds are not the same, each has a differing experience.

And then we add who you are. One is old, sitting next to a husband of many years, another is old sitting alone, another is young, soon to bear her first baby, another looking to see what his teenage is doing at this moment. Sometimes I marvel when you come to the communion rail, the young and the old, rich and poor, powerful and weak, athlete and cripple, all together, mixed reaching out for one body, one blood. Some of your lives never touch anywhere else but in this place.

And then we must add your experiences, where you have been since we last gathered here, who you encountered, what you did. Each of your weeks has been

different. You have talked with a collection of people no one else has talked with this week, you have said words no one else has said, you have had opportunities to touch lives that no one else has had.

Later this morning we will sit, many of you in the same place you are sitting now, and seek God's will for his church. Some will speak much, some will listen much, some will speak a little, some will listen little. Each will come with an idea about what is true and right and proper. And the trues and the rights and the proper will not be the same. Right now some who sit next to you are seeing just about what you are seeing, and hearing just about what you are hearing. Across the room they are having a different experience. At the meeting some will have ideas that are similar, others whose lives and experiences differ ^{will} not agree with them. Who is right? Hear again what St. Paul writes: FOR JUST AS THE BODY IS ONE AND HAS MANY MEMBERS, AND ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE BODY, THOUGH MANY, ARE ONE BODY, SO IT IS WITH CHRIST. FOR BY ONE SPIRIT WE WERE ALL BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY - JEWS OR GREEKS, SLAVES OR FREE, AND ALL WERE MADE TO DRINK OF ONE SPIRIT. FOR THE BODY DOES NOT CONSIST OF ONE MEMBER BUT OF MANY. IF THE FOOT SHOULD SAY, "BECAUSE I AM NOT A HAND, IF ~~AMXNETXAXEAXXEXEY~~ THE BODY THAT WOULD NOT MAKE IT ANY LESS A PART OF THE BODY. AND IF THE EAR SHOULD SAY BECAUSE I AM NOT AN EYE I DO NOT BELONG TO THE BODY, THAT WOULD NOT MAKE IT ANY LESS A PART OF THE BODY. IF THE WHOLE BODY WERE AN EYE WHERE WOULD BE THE HEARING? IF THE WHOLE BODY WERE AN EAR, WHERE WOULD BE THE SENSE OF SMELL? BUT AS IT IS GOD ARRANGED THE ORGANS IN THE BODY EACH ONE OF THEM AS HE CHOSE. IF ALL WERE A SINGLE ORGAN WHERE WOULD THE BODY BE? AS IT IS THERE ARE MANY PARTS, YET ONE BODY.

Sometimes I wish that everyone were like me, that everyone saw things my way. Sometimes I am like a solipsist, thinking reality is only what is seen by these eyes and heard by these ears and thought by this brain. St Paul says, consider your own bodies, hands and feet are not the same, if they were, how great would be the loss. We are not the same, because God knew he had not one task, one function to perform in the church and in the world but many. God makes us different, each unique, so he can do through you what he can do through

no other person on the face of this earth. With you God will touch lives this week that he will touch with no other life at that moment in time. God will set opportunities before you to love and to witness and to share that no one else will have this week. Each of you from young to old, rich to poor strong or weak, will be ~~and~~ Christ embracing his loved ones as you live where he has placed you this week. For Paul continues: Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

You when you walk and talk and work and play and worship and sing are the body of Christ, each of you members, parts that differ. one a hand, ~~and~~ another a foot, one called to visit a friend in the hospital, another the nurse who cares for that patient, another the doctor who seeks the ^{healing} ~~holding~~ of that patient, another the wife who sits with him. Christ comes to that patient through each of you in differing ways, just as Christ embraces children through mothers and fathers and brings help and cheer through the gracious store clerk. You are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Today the body of Christ meets to decide for the coming year. The thoughts, opinions, feelings, contributions, votes of each member, each of you are ~~essen~~ essential. God has called us together into this body, the perspective and experience and situation that each of you brings to our meeting will help the whole body to be faithful to our Lord. We pray, Thy will be done, God gives us each other, to see that his will is done in us. Amen

We are not solipsists, not simply a collection of individuals, we are the body of Christ. Each is essential to the whole. You are essential to the body of Christ in this place. Amen.