

St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church
2368 Eggert Road, Tonawanda, NY 14150 716.831.1777
Sat. – Sun., August 26-27, 2016

“Growth – Hope Of”

Fr. Richard Molison, Preacher

One morning last week, I stood at the kitchen sink pouring some orange juice into a glass. On the surface of the counter, I noticed short bits of rainbows dancing on the counter top. I looked up to see tens of bits of rainbows dancing on the kitchen walls and floor. For many, many years, probably for more than 3 decades, hanging by a string from the window over the kitchen sink is a small crystal sphere. I hesitate to call it a crystal ball. The surface of this crystal sphere is covered with many facets, like those found on a valued gem stone such as a diamond. When the morning sun light shines through this window and specifically through the crystal sphere, tens of rainbow bits are seen dancing on the walls, countertops, table tops and floor of the kitchen. Our then young children, when sitting at the kitchen table for breakfast, loved it when mom or dad would twist the string resulting in a rainbow shower of color floating around the room. Even though I was alone, I could not resist twisting the string one more time.

It is a fascinating thing to observe the fracking, the breaking down of white light when being passed through a clear prism. The result is a beautiful rainbow of colors. Through such an observation, we come to understand that white light is not an entity unto itself, but rather a composite of all the colors of the rainbow.

I brought with me this morning, a flashlight and a clear crystal prism. This prism is too small and my light source is not strong enough to project a visible rainbow onto our wall. I was successful at home, however. The clear prism has the shape of a triangle, or pyramid. Light passing through the narrower part of the prism travels faster than the light passing through the thicker part of the prism. This action causes the light to be fractioned, broken down and separated into its rainbow component parts.

So, white light, appearing as a single entity, truly is a composite of all the colors in the spectrum of colors. So, if white light is the total composite of all the colors of the spectrum, what, then, is black? Black is the total absence, the total lack of light. It truly contains nothing; no color pigment of light. Jesus definitely knew what he was talking about when he stated that light overcomes darkness. Light in its full composite of colors, easily over comes the powers of darkness. Even one little candle over comes darkness and enables a room to glow.

Jesus stated that we are to be the light of the world. We are not to put a shade on this light of ours, but rather to be a lamp on a hill, a beacon on a hill for all to see. Thus Matthew 5:16, “Let

you light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Light is an important metaphor, a primary source of teaching for Jesus. The word *light* is used some 37 times just in the four gospels alone.

We, you and I, are to be the light of the world. We, the body of Christ, the body of Christ known as St. Bartholomew's, are to be a light to the world. As was just shared with you, light is a composite of all the colors of the rainbow. We, too, as a body of Christ, are a composite of many parts. As with the removal of one element of that light not only changes it, but also diminishes its intensity, so too, the removal or inactivity of one member of this Body of Christ diminishes its intensity, its effectiveness.

Continuing with the metaphor of light as used by Jesus to illustrate what we are to be, let's apply this metaphor to what St. Paul shared about the body of Christ. Most of us are familiar with Paul's understanding of the composition of the body of Christ as given in the 12th chapter of his first epistle to the church at Corinth, Greece. I invite you to open a pew Bible to page 1149, to the bottom of the second column, beginning with verse 12.

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Paul is using the human body as an analogy, as an illustration to enable us to understand the theological make-up of the body of Christ. Through our faith, all are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ.

Paul continues in verse 14

¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many.

AS with light, there are many parts wonderfully integrated within our bodies. Even though the following may seem obvious to us, nevertheless, it is important to once again appreciate our creator and the created human body.

Paul writes in verse 15:

¹⁵ If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a *part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a *part* of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a *part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a *part* of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole (body) were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. (Who is in control here?) ¹⁹ If they were all one member, where would the body be?

Paul is reminding us that each part of the body is essential for the full functioning of the body. To remove any part of the body significantly reduces its functionality. All of us have seen the results of persons tragically losing an arm or a leg, or more. Our hearts go out to them.

Verse 20:

²⁰ But now there are many members (of a body), but one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; ²³ and those *members* of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, ²⁴ whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked,

Stop here for a moment. So, what is going on here? Paul is illustrating through the metaphor of the body that no one part of the body ought to be revered more highly than another. The eye, for instance, very much visible to others. For some, it deserves to be enhanced by the use of eye make-up. Does such behavior increase the eyes significance, say, with the internal organs? Try living without a heart or stomach or liver, etc. That which is deemed seemingly insignificant is just as vital for the survival of the body just as much as the eye or the nose, etc. are.

Paul continues:

²⁵ so that there may be no division in the body (any division diminishes the functionality of the body), **but *that* the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.**

Does not a tooth ache or an ear ache effect the entire body? Mine did! Does breaking an arm or a leg effect the functionality of the whole body? You betcha! As Paul wrote, if one member of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. As Jesus so masterfully did with his teachings, Paul now turns from what we are very familiar with: the physical, the seen, the worldly, to a second level, a higher level, the spiritual realm.

Verse 27:

²⁷ Now you are Christ's body... Please do not take this statement lightly. You, collectively and individually, are Christ's body! Wow!

Look around you. Look all around you. You are not just an individual sitting her today. You are a member of a body of Christ. And as Paul wrote in the last part of verse 27, you are **individually members of it.** Now, look down at yourself. You are as much a part of this

body of Christ as your arm, eyes, heart, are significant parts of your body. You are just as important to this body of Christ as any part of your body is important to you. I desire very much that this one point be taken very seriously, not to be taken lightly. I repeat. You, each and every one of you, are just as important, just as necessary, just as needed, for this body of Christ's survival as every part of your body is necessary, needed, important for your full functionality and survival.

And as each part of our body has a specific function, a role to play, without which our survival could very well be in question, so you have a significant role to play out in this body of Christ known as St. Bartholomew's, without which its functionality, its survival may be significantly affected.

All of this leads to the question, "So, what is expected of you?"

At this time, I need four volunteers, four volunteers to come forward. All I need you to do is to stand in one place and hold a tape measure. So, anyone can do it. Do I have four volunteers?

(Space the four people about 3 feet apart. Hand beginning of tape to first person facing the congregation. Pull tape out across the volunteers, each person holding the tape so as not to bend it. Pull tape out to 168" or 14'. Explain:)

The measuring tape has been pulled to 168" inches. Why 168? We know that there are 24 hours in a day. If we multiply 24 by 7, 7 days in a week, the total number of hours in a week are 168. Now, I am going to place a marker on the inch line representing the hour of our church service. This marker represents the one hour of the week you are in attendance at church.

At the end of the sermon two weeks ago which spoke about how faith equals action, a question was asked of you. Does anyone remember what that question was? "What hope do you have for St. Bartholomew's?" Does anyone remember the very first answer given? "**GROWTH!**" It may of interest for you to know that that answer, "Growth," was the very first response given at all three services! Your responses revealed that growth of this body of Christ is very much on your mind. If it is of any comfort to you, the subject of growth lies in the minds of the staff as well.

So, how will growth occur? Osmosis? Sitting back and watching, hoping that someone else will step up to the plate? We all know that is not going to happen. Two weeks ago, it was shared with you that there is no faith when evidence of that faith, proof of that faith, fruit of that faith, is missing. For out of faith, works are produced; fruit is produced; action taken; progress made.

Please observe this tape. The marker represents our time receiving the Word of Christ and being fed the sacred Sacrament of His Body and Blood. And having been taught and fed, in this

one hour, what is Christ's expectation of us? To be His ambassador in the world. And just look at the amount of time left to accomplish that! Even after deducting work and sleeping schedules, better than fifty hours of the week remain for optional commitments. It all boils down to the priorities set in the use of our time. (Retrieve tape.)

Some may say that they are producing works of my faith. Some volunteer to maintain our flower beds and greenery to make our grounds attractive. And they do! The grounds are beautiful! "Thank you!" Some may say that they sing in the choir, and their contribution is very much appreciated! And, there are other activities occurring within this parish in which many participate. But are such activities that what Christ meant by what is known as "The Great Commission"? The above mention activities just mentioned and others like them, are home-centered, that is they pretty much are what we do for our own homes. Such activities basically are for the maintenance, improvement or enhancement of the parish and its membership. Such activities are internally oriented; not external. Needed? Yes! Appreciated? Yes! But is "The Great Commission" being fulfilled through such activities?

Jesus stated in Matthew 28:19: **"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."**

Even as necessary as activities that we have in this parish are, do these home-centered activities fulfill this commission of Jesus? Will these home-centered activities/ ministries in and of themselves grow this body of Christ, His church? From your responses to my question of two weeks ago, we safely can say, "No, they do not!" Then apparently we are not doing what Jesus asked us to do – which is to "Go to the nations; go out into the world"; go out to the unchurched, wherever they may be....

We are to let our light shine. It is a given that our light shines very well inside this body of Christ. But Jesus commands that our light is to shine outside, that we are to be a beacon of light to the world! We, this body of Christ, individually and collectively, everyone is to be on board, to reach out into the world. And this outreach ministry can take a myriad of forms. And it will. Soon, this body of Christ – and reflect upon what was shared about the make-up of this body of Christ - this body of Christ will be requested to participate in projects designed to reach out to the unchurched and to bring them to Christ. If there is to be growth, hope and faith in that growth must be put into action. If one member of this body falters, the whole body falters. Greater the faith by every member of the body, greater the commitment by every member of this body, greater the fruits of bringing others to Christ.

Only then will your hope for growth be realized.