

"Living in the Heavens" Talk Series
Talk No. 8, "Our Role in the Body"
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Purpose of the "Living in the Heavens" Talk Series:

1. To help foster renewal as we fan into flame our first love and transcend our comfort zone and to expand our vision of the Body of Christ.
2. To offer a focus for prayer that is inspiring and challenging so that we bring the talks into our personal prayer and discussion groups in order that they may be experienced in such a way that God can work in and through us to build up His Kingdom.

Tonight we will offer the eighth and final talk in the series and it is titled, "Our Role in the Body of Christ".

Discussion of the Body of Christ, the Church:

The term "Body of Christ" has two connotations and each is literal and not metaphorical: it refers to the reality of the Eucharist given at the Last Supper Luke 22:19-20) ¹⁹ And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you."

And the term the Body of Christ refers to the Church - believers in Christ. Colossians 1:18 ¹⁸ And (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy'.

When we are baptized we become members of the Body of Christ- the Church, which includes: the Church Militant (on earth), the Church Suffering (in purgatory), and the Church Triumphant (in heaven). Jesus provides the Church militant with the real presence of His Body and Blood in the Eucharist as nourishment ('real food and real drink') to sustain us on our earthly pilgrimage.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)-766 "The Church is born primarily of Christ's total self-giving for our salvation, anticipated in the institution of the Eucharist and fulfilled on the cross. "The origin and growth of the Church are symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of the crucified Jesus." (Lumen Gentium) "For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the 'wondrous sacrament of the whole Church.' As Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam's side, so the Church was born from the pierced heart of Christ hanging dead on the cross."

What is our role in the Body of Christ?

At a high level, using the previous talks' titles, our role in the Body of Christ consists in:

1. Knowing that there are two kingdoms and choosing to serve God
2. Praying that the Lord's will be done on earth as it is in heaven
3. Living as Children of God
4. Being/presenting the Light of Christ in the world
5. Advancing the Kingdom of God
6. Utilizing and relying on the Equipment, or Gifts, Jesus gives us to accomplish our role

The Son of God became incarnate to make us partakers of the divine nature, to free us from sin and death, and to grant us immortality. II Peter 1:3-4: "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by His own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

1- In Our Role in the Body of Christ: We Have Been Called to Worship

Romans 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." Revelation 4:10-11 tells us, "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." John 4:23-24 states "The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." At Mass the Eucharist contains and expresses the highest form of prayer: it is "the pure offering" of the whole Body of Christ to the one and perfect offering which is Christ. In our personal prayer we surrender our lives to the Lord and offer all of our prayers, works, joys and sufferings to Him. At Prayer Meeting we come together and worship as His body and seek out His word for us. Miracles and healings take place.

2- In Our Role in the Body of Christ: We Have Been Called to Evangelize and to Intercede for the World

Pope Francis states, in Joy of Evangelism, "In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples," Pope Francis affirms. "All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization. . . Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged" (Evangelii Gaudium, 120). "...all the members..."

And, "We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. "Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others." (Joy of the Gospel – Para. 8)

Examples of stepping out of your comfort zone: Witnessing to life at an abortion clinic and participating in street evangelization. Quote from Randy Clark of Global Awakening, "If you are not receiving maybe it's because you should be sharing".

Let us look briefly look at these blessings and gifts:

1 Cor 12: 4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Isaiah 11 Gifts: "...the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—³and he will delight in the fear of the LORD."

One of the most important gifts we have is the Word of God: Scripture. In it we can encounter Jesus and 'learn Christ' as well as allow Scripture to enlighten our path with the Lord's will for our lives personally and to help discern His role for us in the Kingdom. As baptized members of the Church, His Body, Jesus has a plan for each of us to serve.

"And yet I will show you the most excellent way" – 1 Cor. 13:1-7 "Love, which is the foundation of all the gifts". 1 Peter 4:8 "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins."

We Serve the Lord Individually and Corporately:

CCC791 The body's unity does not do away with the diversity of its members: "In the building up of Christ's Body there is engaged a diversity of members and functions. There is only one Spirit who, according to His own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives His different gifts for the welfare of the Church." The unity of the Mystical Body produces and stimulates charity among the faithful: "From this it follows that if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with him, and if one member is honored, all the members together rejoice." Finally, the unity of the Mystical

Body triumphs over all human divisions: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

Colossians 1:24 "Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of His body, which is the church. Both the sufferings of the Head and of the members are called the sufferings of Christ, and make up, as it were, one body of sufferings. But He suffered for the redemption of the church; we suffer on other accounts; for we do but slightly taste that cup of afflictions of which Christ first drank deeply. A Christian may be said to fill up that which remains of the sufferings of Christ, when he takes up his cross, and after the pattern of Christ, bears patiently the afflictions God allots to him."

3- In Our Role in the Body of Christ: We Have Been Called to Humble Service

1Corinthians 12:27-31 "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues^[a]? Do all interpret? ³¹Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

We serve each other in MoGC: Example gifts are leadership, serving, caring for the poor, consoling, encouraging, hospitality, intercession and administration, Chair ministry, music ministry, PM ministry, greeters ministry, children's ministry, hospitality, healing, intercessory, deliverance ministries, leadership ministry, administration, evangelization, youth, deaconate ministries, Fr. Francis ministry, sacristans, altar servers, EMs, Lectors, MoG School, etc. the list is long! And does not include the many 'personal ministries' people do privately.

While serving, St. Paul reminds us, in Romans 12:3-8: ³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,^[b] do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

And again in Ephesians 4:1-6 "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to

one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Let Us Learn From Mary, Our Mother:

"Whenever we look to Mary, we come to believe once again in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness. In her we see that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong that need not treat others poorly in order to feel important themselves. Contemplating Mary, we realize that she who praised God for "bringing down the mighty from their thrones" and "sending the rich away empty" (Lk 1:52-53) is also the one who brings a maternal warmth to our pursuit of justice. She is also the one who carefully keeps "all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19). She is a powerful intercessor. This interplay of justice and tenderness, of contemplation and concern for others, is what makes the ecclesial community look to Mary as a model of evangelization. ... It is the Risen Christ who tells us, with a power that fills us with confidence and unshakeable hope: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5). With Mary we advance confidently towards the fulfilment of this promise." (Joy of the Gospel – Para. 288)

So in conclusion we see that our Role in the Body consists in a call to:

Worship God, Evangelize/Intercede, and Humbly Serve

And finally, let us recall the words of Mary in John 2:5 "His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you."

Supplemental Material:

1-Ponder the following scriptures and ask the Lord how He wants you to use your gifts to build the kingdom: Sometimes he just wants us to take a risk, step out and put them to use.

- Colossians 1:18
- II Peter 1:3-4
- Romans 12:1
- Galatians 3:28
- Ephesians 4:1-6

2-Some Ways of Discovering Your Role in the Body of Christ

- PRAYER asking God to show you clearly through Scripture, your natural abilities and gifts & to confirm it
- BEING AVAILABLE for service
- KEEPING A SPIRITUAL JOURNAL of things you feel the LORD saying to you.
- CONFIRMATION FROM OTHER CHRISTIANS

READ OR REREAD: Sherry Weddell's book Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus BE MINDFUL OF the Importance of Listening & Obedience: *The most important thing is to listen carefully to what God says to you and to be obedient.*

It is important to recognize the difference between a natural ability and a supernatural anointing.

Natural ability is something we seem to have from childhood and is a mix of genetic inheritance and specific training and experiences. They include such things as physical strength and skill; ability with words and expressing things; practical skills in terms of making things or fixing things; drawing and creative abilities; musical gifts; intellectual abilities such as mathematics, scientific knowledge or languages; a naturally compassionate nature for helping people; etc.

Supernatural anointing on the other hand is a gifting we seem to have for certain situations involving our relationship with God. We find, for example, when speaking to someone that God shows us things about them that help to explain why s/he is having problems; at the end of a chat, the person says what a help we have been, in spite of the fact we may have simply listened to him/her sharing his/her problems. The key is that God blesses others through the spiritual anointing on what we are doing.

3-General Areas of Ministry & Service:

- PRACTICAL work such as the ability to get a technical problem solved or provides practical help e.g. fixing electrical or plumbing problems . It is more than just a natural ability - God seems to bless others through what you do.
- ADMINISTRATIVE gifting - the ability to see the steps involved in doing a job and organizing things so the job is done efficiently and to the highest standard
- PASTORAL WORK including getting alongside people who are having problems and showing the compassion of Christ by listening, sharing the Word of God, praying and perhaps offering godly counsel
- TEACHING/PREACHING explaining the word of God to people in ways they understand and which build up the Body
- PRAYER & INTERCESSORY MINISTRY involving praying for people and situations at the personal, local and national level as the Holy Spirit leads
- EVANGELISM involves reaching out to the church and unchurched with the Good News of the gospel in ways that result in people turning to Christ.
- MISSIONARY/APOSTOLIC service in taking the gospel to areas where there is no Christian witness. It involves the idea of 'being sent out' to take the Good News of Jesus to those who don't know him yet
- HOSPITALITY is a form of Friendship Evangelism where God blesses others through your willingness to share your home with them.
- HEALING MINISTRY of various kinds, physical and emotional.
- DELIVERANCE MINISTRY bringing release to individuals in mental, emotional or spiritual bondage to demonic spirits (as opposed to suffering from psychiatric disorders)
- FINANCIAL SUPPORT of ministry is a way of giving to the work of the gospel for those who have the ability to make money and bless others through their generosity
- PROPHETIC MINISTRY involving speaking out words from God to the church
- HELPS & ACTS OF MERCY covers the area of reaching out with the love of Jesus to people who need help and have seldom or never experienced unconditional love
- PRAISE & WORSHIP in words, music, drama, through the arts, which helps others to praise and worship God and express their gratitude to God for his amazing grace