

CHURCH: THE BODY OF CHRIST



Saul was a committed Pharisee. He was educated under a well known Rabbi named Gamaliel. And he knew thoroughly the Jewish law and traditions and practised them. He could not accept Jesus and wanted to blot out that name from the face of the earth. One day he was going to Damascus with orders from the authorities in Jerusalem to bind and bring to Jerusalem anyone who followed the teachings of Jesus. Suddenly, he was struck by a lighting from the sky and fell to the ground. He heard a voice speaking to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” Saul said: “Who are you Lord?” He was told, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting; but get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” When he got up from the ground, he could see nothing. He was led into Damascus by his friends. (Acts 9:1-9).

Saul understood the significance of the light that struck

him. He knew that it was Jesus of Nazareth whom the Jewish leaders crucified and killed, calling him a blasphemer had risen and spoken to him. He is truly living. He lives and acts through his followers, the Christians, the Church. This incident made him to believe this.

Church : The Body of Christ

The Church is the body of Christ. This was a great insight of St. Paul. Jesus made it clear to him that when he persecuted the Christians he was persecuting Christ himself. Paul shares with us the same insight in his letter to the Romans: **“For, as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.”** (Rom. 12:4-5). Paul teaches us that Christ is the head of the body that is the Church (Col. 1:18). We are members of this body, the Church of which Christ is the Head.

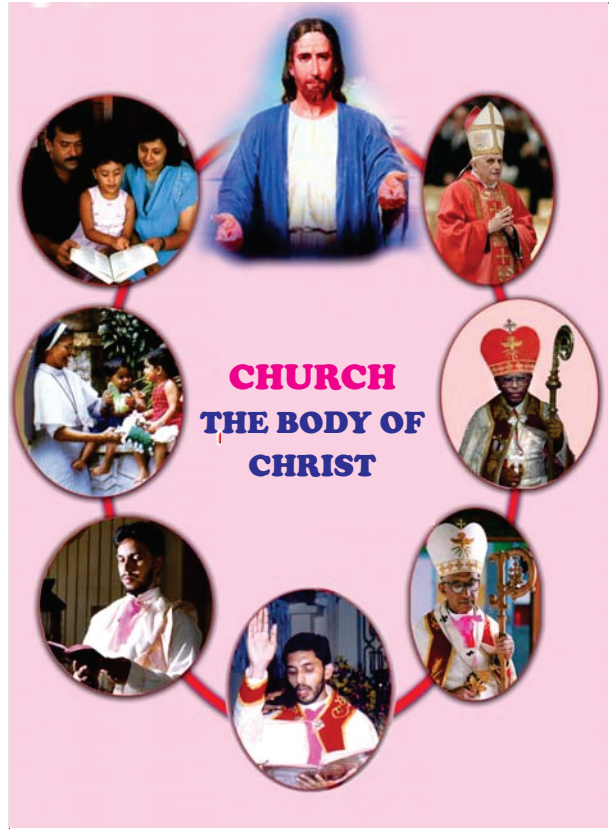
It is from the head that power flows into the members. Likewise, from Christ, the head, we the members of the Church receive power. As members, we remain subject to the head. There exists an essential union between the head and the members in human body. The same can be said of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Again the head and the members participate in the one and the same life. In the same way we the members of the Church, share the same life that is in the head, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Nourishes the Church

Jesus told his disciples that he would not leave them orphans (Jn, 14:18); that he would be with them to the end of the age (Mt. 28:20). **Jesus ensures his constant presence in the Church through the Word of God, the sacraments and fellowship in the Church. He leads us through this word and nourishes us day after day through the Holy Eucharist. We become one with him by participating in his body and blood in the Eucharist. At the same time we become united with one another by partaking of the one bread and the one cup. Thus the fellowship in the Church is reinforced.**

Various Ministers in the Church

We read in 1 Corinthians :
“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.” (1Cor. 12:12). Though there are many members in the body, each member has his own function to fulfil. There is a complementary nature among the members. This makes the functioning of the body effective. Thus each member of the Church has different functions. God has called each member to distinct and various services



St. Paul says, “God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then deacons of power, then gifts of healing forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues” (1 Cor 12:28). God gives necessary grace and gifts to each so that each can minister to the Church.

As children of the holy mother, the Church, our duty is to acknowledge their gifts and serve the Church according to the will of Jesus. We should use these gifts for the glory of God and the growth of the Church. Do good to others and share with others what you have, is the core of Biblical teaching, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35).

The One who Loves Jesus, Loves the Church

Just as we love Jesus, we should love His body, the Church. We cannot love Jesus apart from the Church nor can we love the Church apart from Jesus. We can love

the Church only if we see in it Jesus himself. **Jesus Christ lives in the Church and through the Church He leads us, teaches us and sanctifies us.**

Let us be aware of the fact that we are all members of the body of Christ and have special love and concern for the poor, the afflicted, the sick, the orphans, the widows, the aged and the children.

**Word of God
to Read and
Meditate**

1 Cor 12:12-31

Word of God to Remember

“Now you are the body of Christ,
and individually members of it”.
(1 Cor. 12:27).

Let us Pray

Jesus the Head and Protector of the
Church, enable us to grow in you
and in turn make the
Church grow through our efforts.

My Resolution

I will participate actively in the
various activities in my Parish.

To Think with the Church

As all the members of the human body, though they are many, form one body, so also are the faithful in Christ (1 Cor. 12:12). Also, 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

(Vat. II, The Church, No-7)

To Know the Mother Church

The Mar Thomma Christians were led by the Bishops appointed by Chaldaea Patriarchs till the 17th Century. As they were foreigners, the practical governance was carried out by the Archdeacon who was a native. The Archdeacon was an unmarried priest. He was the leader both in the social and ecclesiastical matters. He was the judge in the internal affairs of the Mar Thomma Christians. He administered the Church in the absence of a Bishop, and arranged the installation of a new Bishop. It was the office of the Archdeacon that unified the Mar Thomma Christians. He was also known by names like 'Arkadiakon', Jathikkukarthavyan.

Questions

1. How did St. Paul get the insight that the Church is the body of Christ?
2. How does Jesus continue his constant presence in the Church?
3. How does the Holy Eucharist unite us to Jesus and to one another?
4. How should we use the gifts given to us as members of the Church?
5. We cannot see Jesus apart from the Church nor can we see the Church apart from Jesus. Explain.