

August 20, 2010

To the Faithful of the Diocese of Cleveland

Bishop Richard Lennon

Praying for unity everyone's mission

In my article for this paper on July 23, four weeks ago today, I wrote about the importance of unity and communion among the Catholic Faithful.

We know that unity and communion are what Jesus prayed for the night before He suffered and died as recounted for us by St. John: ***“that they may all be one; that they may be one in us, as you Father are in me, and I in you.”***

Also, we have the beautiful teaching of St. Paul found in his letters describing the followers of Jesus as the Body of Christ, each person being a member of the Body of Christ ***in union with one another and most importantly with Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body.***

This focus on unity and communion on the part of the Church has been significant for centuries because of the failures of persons and groups of people to live ***“unity and communion”*** according to the mind of the Church. Thus, the Church consistently has urged all to pray for and work for unity among all Christians. This is what I wrote about four weeks ago in my regular column, not knowing I would be returning to this issue so soon.

Yet, events of last Sunday, as reported by the media require me as Bishop of Cleveland and as Brother to the Brothers and Sisters in the household of Faith of Cleveland to revisit this matter of ***“unity and communion.”***

As reported, three hundred and fifty people gathered with a priest to celebrate Mass knowing that it was not authorized by the Diocese of Cleveland. The events of last weekend are of grave concern.

As found in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the Church teaches that, ***“The bonds which bind people to the Church in a visible way are profession of faith, the sacraments, and the ecclesiastical government and communion.”*** These are the very foundational elements constituting membership in the Catholic Church, which also provides the setting for persevering in charity.

The events of last weekend involve all the Faithful for what happens in the life of any one person affects all, and so it is true regarding a group of the Faithful affecting the entire Body of the Church. None of us can shrug it off by saying it does not involve me. Yes, it involves all of us if we are to be true to the prayer of Jesus: ***“Lord, may they be one as you and I are one.”***

This is not a time for dismissive words or actions; rather, it is a time for prayer and calmness. It is an opportunity to realize the teachings of Jesus and of His Church here in our diocese so that faithfully we are living and reflecting the will of God in our midst.

Please know I hope to meet with Father Robert Marrone and will make myself available to have conversation with the lay leaders of the “Community of St. Peter.”

At this moment, I cannot think of anything that is more urgent for our diocese than addressing this matter--my prayer is that all the Faithful will be committed to going forward.