

A sermon  
in St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney.

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This sermon was preached before  
members of the Thirty Fifth Synod  
of the Diocese of Sydney at the  
Centenary of the Cathedral Church  
of St Andrew

by David Broughton Knox,

Senior Canon of the Cathedral

on October 13 1969.

I Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body and were all made to drink of one Spirit".

Each of the four gospels emphasises at the beginning of the Lord's ministry that His work would be to baptize with the Holy Spirit, and they put this in sharp contrast to the ministry of John the Baptist, who was baptizing with water. At the end of Jesus' ministry, on the eve of His ascension, our Lord reaffirmed that baptism with the Holy Spirit was to be the experience of every Christian. He told His disciples, "John indeed baptized with water but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence". This promise of baptism by Jesus with the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, when the small band of Christian disciples - 120 in all - were gathered in the upper room, when Jesus poured out on them His Holy Spirit. Having received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, He poured it out on the disciples, is how St Peter explained the phenomenon to the marveling spectators. A little later Cornelius and his household received the same baptism with the Holy Spirit at the hand of Jesus, as they believed the Gospel Peter was preaching. It was the same baptism as at Pentecost. Peter explained, "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how that He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but

you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit!".

Baptism with the Spirit of God is the initial act which makes us Christians. It is the gift of Christ, for it is He who adds to the church. In Titus, Paul calls this action a 'washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit', and in John 3 Jesus calls it 'a new birth', a 'being born of the Spirit', and in the next chapter he calls it a 'drinking of living water' which becomes a well of water bubbling up within the Christian and bringing him into eternal life. In John 7 Jesus described this work of the Spirit as rivers flowing out from the Christian's heart. It is interesting to note that all these images of this initial work of the Spirit in the Christian are drawn from water - washing, pouring, drinking, baptizing, bubbling wells, flowing rivers - all are water metaphors, and this imagery is based on the Old Testament where the life-giving Spirit of God is often spoken of in terms of water - a natural metaphor in a dry and parched country.

In our text the work of Jesus in making us Christians through His Spirit is described by the Apostle Paul under a two-fold water metaphor. "You were all baptized with the Spirit ... and you were all given the Spirit to drink". We should note the universality of this work of the Spirit throughout the Christian body. As the Prophet Joel foretold, every Christian has the Spirit



poured out on him, that is, he has been 'baptized with the Spirit' to quote Jesus' words; he has 'drunk of the Spirit' to quote St Paul in our text. It is this work of the Spirit within which makes the Christian a new man, a new creation; for the Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Creator, and St Paul says in Romans "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His". If we have not been baptized by Jesus with the Holy Spirit in regeneration and the new birth, then we have not begun to be Christians, we are still in our sins, still lost eternally. The initial step is to respond to the gracious invitation of the Lord "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink".

The fact that every Christian without exception has received this relationship to the Spirit becomes the ground of our unity as Christians. It is a very close unity, often compared in the New Testament to the unity of the human body. It is a supernatural unity; it is brought about by each of us sharing in the Spirit of God himself. St Paul stresses the Spirit as the unitive factor: "With one Spirit you were all baptized into one body and you were all made to drink of one Spirit". Elsewhere in the New Testament this unity is spoken of as the fellowship of the Spirit, for Christian unity is not a dead inert unity, but it is a unity created by God's presence, by the life-giving Spirit of God, so that it is personal; it is fellowship.

Within this fellowship the Spirit of Christ gives specific gifts with the view that ministering among ourselves these gifts, we may both express our fellowship and build it up. Some of these gifts are mentioned in the passage from which the text is taken. We read of apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helps, administrators, tongues. Elsewhere St Paul mentions other gifts given by the same Spirit. Everyone has his own gift and the whole fellowship supports each of us in the exercise of our gifts, which we should use for God's glory and for building one another up.

The Christian church is primarily a spiritual unity, "With one Spirit were we all baptized into one body" and from within this unity we exercise our God-given gifts of teaching, of helping, of administration, of evangelism.

How does a cathedral fit into this concept of God's people being a fellowship through the Spirit of Christ, with the unity of the one Spirit in the diversity of different gifts? In our text the church is compared to the human body, which is a unity with its different parts held together in an intense oneness by the person whose body it is. This is the picture that St Paul gives us of the Christian church, of which we have been made members by the baptism with the Spirit of Christ.

Where then does the Cathedral fit into this picture? Or for that matter,

where does Synod, or Church House fit in? The church is a fellowship as we have seen, and if we reflect on the nature of fellowship we will see that all fellowships create structures through which they express themselves and which assist them in being fellowships. Take for example the simple illustration of a Women's Fellowship meeting. One of its members will provide the tea and another the milk, another takes the chair. These simple structures are designed to strengthen and assist the fellowship in its functioning. So, too, the Christian church, which is a fellowship of the Spirit, has over the centuries created various structures to express its fellowship, and to assist it. The purpose of these structures is to strengthen that fellowship by being vehicles for its expression, and a means of assisting the exercising of the ministries of its members.

The great danger is the ever present tendency to regard the structures as important in themselves, especially as they are more visible than is fellowship, which is personal and invisible though the real thing. The danger is that instead of the structures serving the fellowship it comes about that the fellowship is made to serve the structures, and this destroys the fellowship. Structures, too, may become top heavy or out of date, and so injure the fellowship instead of assisting it. They may become authoritarian, and so infringe



and injure the exercising of those ministries which the Spirit of Christ gives directly to each of His members. The test of any church structure is whether it assists the fellowship of the Spirit and aids the Spirit given ministries of the members.

Cathedrals are institutions which the Christian church has created and used for over 1,400 years as an aid to express its unity and fulfil its ministries. This evening we celebrate the 100th anniversary of this Cathedral building in which we are gathered. A church building is in itself a symbol of unity, for its sole purpose is to provide a meeting place for God's people where they can express their fellowship by coming together to unite in common prayer and praise, and to join together in the fellowship meal of the Lord's supper and to hear God's Word expounded. The parish church is a symbol of the unity of the local congregation, and the mother church is the symbol of that unity over the larger area of the diocese. A cathedral is a symbol that the unity of Christ's church is more than local, and it becomes an aid in the larger expression of the unity when within its walls the members of the body of Christ, filled with His Spirit, come together and share fellowship in the Christian hope.

A cathedral not only serves the larger expression of the unity of Christ's people in this way but should also serve in furthering one of the



basic ministries which the Spirit of God gives within the body of Christ, that is, the ministry of teaching the Word of God. The very name 'Cathedral' means the place of teaching, for a cathedra is the Greek word for the teacher's chair on which he sits to instruct. Teaching is a basic ministry in the church, whether the teaching is in the home by the parents, or in the congregation by the minister, for the knowledge of God is the foundation of Christian faith, Christian worship and Christian obedience. The Christian life is motivated by the Christian hope. These things must be taught. We are not born with this supernatural knowledge, we must be taught it from the Word of God. Christ rules our consciences through His Word and the pastor who rules the flock of God must teach the Word, and apply it to the conscience. This is his only instrument for ruling in the name of Christ. It is not possible to be a pastor without being a teacher, and that is why the Scripture insists that those who are admitted to the office of pastor must be 'apt to teach'. On the other hand it is possible to be a teacher without having pastoral responsibilities, and that is why the cathedral church with its central position may well serve the work of teaching, though pastoral care must be given on a more intimate basis. The unit of the parish is suited for the exercise of a pastoral ministry, which needs for its exercise regular fellowship between pastor and people, so that pastor and people are able to

exercise mutual care and responsibility, exhortation, encouragement and admonition, one for the other. Happy is the pastor of such a fellowship. The unit of the diocese is better suited for administration and for teaching. The mother church, and the chief minister whose cathedral it is, exercises the ministry of teaching; Dean and Canons assist in this fundamental work of teaching the people of God the Word of God. When 100 years ago Bishop Barker, Bishop of Sydney and Metropolitan of Australia consecrated this building in the presence of the Governor and of the leaders of church and state, he emphasised these two features of a cathedral's ministry: that it should be a symbol and a service of the unity of God's people, and it should be a place for the teaching of those people the Word of God. These are the fundamental ministries of every cathedral by its very nature as a mother church of the diocese and the place where the bishop has his cathedra or teaching chair.

But our Cathedral has a further vital ministry because of its unique position in the heart of this busy city, and that is the ministry of evangelism, bringing the gospel to those outside the knowledge of Christ. This building takes its name from St Andrew, who was the first in the Gospels to bring someone to Jesus, the first evangelist we may say. He brought his brother Simon who became the leader of the apostles. It is interesting to note that when Bishop Barker preached at the conse-

cration of this building, he added as a third objective for this Cathedral the evangelizing of the City of Sydney.

Evangelism, teaching, fellowship: these were the things this cathedral building was built to serve. We turn the design into reality when through the power of the Spirit we express our fellowship; when we build one another up in our most holy faith through the Word of God; and when we go out to bring our brothers, our acquaintances, our neighbours, into the knowledge of Jesus Christ, to His glory and for their eternal salvation. We have inherited this building through the generosity of those who went before us and may we by God's grace use it for the purposes for which it has been provided; to be a place of fellowship in the Holy Spirit; to be a chair of teaching the Word of God to the people of God, and to be the opportunity for taking the knowledge of Christ to those who live in the community around us. As we join with its founders in these objectives, this building will be used to the glory of God in the years that lie ahead.

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