

# Racialized Ecclesiology, Oneness, and Catholicity

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Many discussions of ecclesiology find their way to the four traditional marks of the church contained in the Nicene Creed. Although they are far from a comprehensive guide to ecclesiology, these four marks open the conversation toward a range of shortcomings when applied to contemporary churches. The church in the contemporary United States is far from the church that the gospel calls into being. In an age questioning the inherited assumptions of Christendom, one mark has captured much theological attention. There is fruitful conversation from many quarters of the church concerning a renewed call to holiness.

On the other hand, the least agreement may persist on the mark of apostolicity, as illustrated in recent remarks promulgated by the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, reiterating one version of the disputed mark of apostolicity.

This division over apostolicity highlights the even more prominent shortcomings of the church with references to the terms “one” and “catholic.” One still hears the occasional excesses of residual Reformation rancor which call the Roman Catholic Church “the whore of Babylon.” Yet new interest in the oneness and catholicity of the church has emerged among Protestants and Catholics since Vatican II. Much of its momentum among Protestants is rooted in regrets for the great damage done to the cause of Christ by the divisiveness of the Reformation and by the subsequent accommodation of Protestantism to modernity. Consequently, many have sought a

solution to the errors of Protestantism in a reappropriation of an earlier tradition less tainted by the mercenary and mercantile impulses of modernity. There is much to be gained from this effort, and it has borne much fruit.

What sometimes fails to appear in this process is the full scope of the contemporary scandal of catholicity and oneness. A great deal of effort by European American Protestants has been exerted toward rapprochement with Roman Catholicism. For the most part, it remains a conversation among Europeans, their ancestors, and their descendents. Thus, it seems to characterize the wound against the oneness and catholicity of the churches as one between feuding Europeans or between America and Europe. There is no denying that this grave wound's roots stretch to an argument started five centuries ago between northern and southern Europeans. Yet, the intra-European argument's subsequent history, and perhaps its deeper roots are intertwined with the rise of European imperialism and the resulting era of European world domination. Consequently, much of the division of the churches also appears in the form of racially and ethnically divided churches. Even the Roman Catholic Church, with its worldwide hierarchy of bishops who symbolize the catholicity and oneness of the church, must admit the imperial and colonial relationship that continues to characterize their center and periphery.

Race cannot be relegated to the margins of theological discourse as if it were unrelated to doctrine. Race oppression and division is not merely a moral failure by people with correct doctrine, but it is an eschatology, an anthropology, a ktisiology, a doctrine of God, an ontology, a soteriology, a Christology, and an ecclesiology. As an ecclesiology, it rejects the catholicity and

oneness of the church. Protestantism, Catholicism, and the rest of the church need healing from this wound.

Some steps along the path to healing come from rigorous analysis and hard thinking about the ways that modern imaginations, indeed the weight of centuries of Christian theology, have been colonized by racial reasoning. Race is often positioned as “the Black problem” or “the Asian problem,” when these are merely the derivatives of the original sin of racism. At its core, race is “the white problem.” Instead of puzzling over how the church (code for “the white church”) can adjust itself to accommodate the difference of blackness, U. S. churches must turn their attention to why and in what ways they have adjusted their theologies to construct the difference of whiteness. On this discussion, J. Kameron Carter’s book, *Race: A Theological Account*, has begun to articulate the ways in which the problem of modernity is inextricably a problem of creating a space for whiteness and for Europeans to rationalize their project of world domination. Carter has argued that the severing of the church’s identity from Israel in European Christian thought created the space for white supremacy and racialized reasoning to emerge not only alongside, but also within Christian tradition, by the late middle ages.

Another fellow traveler in this task of analysis, William C. Turner, Jr., has offered important insight as well. He has studied the scholarly work concerning the ways in which the particularities of the black churches have roots in the historical contexts of the colonial and U. S. slavocracy. He has contributed to this scholarship through his analysis of the appearance of “Holiness” churches, over against the Baptist and Methodist churches. He has helped to demonstrate the continuity of this Holiness movement with the traditions of the black churches

before emancipation. Moreover he has shown the ways that this faithfulness to the gospel's grace and power irrupting among the enslaved Africans eventually grew to be a tidal force whereby the Holiness and Pentecostal vision regained a foothold in the traditional denominations, reshaping and reviving their practices. His scholarly work continues to bear witness against those efforts to maintain the false gospel of race, whether from the overt heresies of the colonial and ante-bellum eras, or from the more recent covert systems designed to maintain the divine endorsement of white domination.

Turner's work on the Church Covenant as a source for insight into doctrine and practice reveals another aspect of his effort to do rigorous theological work. Through the language of the covenant recited in many African American Baptist churches (and some other Baptist churches, too), Turner finds opportunity to explore the full range of the doctrines of the church. A systematician might wish to pigeonhole it as a book on ecclesiology or on discipleship and ethics. But it is far more than that, revealing what any practicing theologian knows: discussing any subject in doctrinal theology leads to every other subject. Thus the discussion of baptism leads to a careful exploration of the Trinity, and a statement about salvation leads to analysis of the relationship of the Son and the Spirit.

The writing displays his immersion and formation in the wisdom and strength of the black church tradition. However, the marketing strategy of the publisher, who targeted it for "African American Christians," misses some of the point. Turner cannot help but do theology from an African American perspective. It is who he is, and it is the setting in which God has taken hold of him to be a servant. But Turner is also a catholic theologian. Just as John Howard

Yoder resisted being treated as merely a sectarian voice from among the Mennonites, Turner deserves to be treated as more than a sectarian from among the black churches. His theology speaks to the church catholic. It is only by receiving this catholic word from those usually categorized as residing at the margins that the contemporary failures of catholicity and oneness can be challenged. One only need look to another of his published works to realize that Turner is not writing in a theological ghetto. His work on the United Holy Church of America, brimming with pneumatological insight, was solicited and published by a press specializing in Eastern Christianity and Middle Eastern Studies.

Other steps along the path to healing the wounds of race require bodily engagement. Turner's record as a student at Duke University, through undergraduate and graduate studies, made him a reputation for engaging race and Christian faith. As one of a tiny number of black students amidst a sea of white faculty, administrators, and students, Turner's body bore witness to a theological challenge to race. He made this ever more clear through the relationships he built among the "invisible," low-paid African American laborers on whose backs rested Duke's doors of opportunity for whites who were privileged to be free to study and take leisure. His clear witness to a gospel of good news to the poor and of liberty for the oppressed gained the attention of those in power who had eyes to see and ears to hear, opening "official" positions in which he could continue the work that he was already doing.

About eleven years ago, as I came to know Turner as my pastor, our conversations and the practices of worship and Bible study began to unsettle some of my formation as a theologian. I come from a stream of white Baptists with pietist leanings, but as I studied for the ministry, I

began to realize that I also operated with a strong rationalistic bent. The rationalism was closely tied to a high view of the Scriptures as central for discipleship. This rationalism was of a populist sort, and not primarily dependent on extensive academic training and writing. These Baptists were mostly outsiders to the recognized canons of Christian erudition. But their unofficial theological reasoning built clear definitions and structures of doctrine through the foundational use of scripture texts. By implication and formation, the regular and careful study of the Bible was highly valued and critical for maintaining the identity of the community of the faithful. These Baptists believed in education above all so that everyone can be a Bible reader.

An indirect way of noting the rationalism of these white Baptists can be seen in their response to Pentecostalism. Some of the strongest polemics were reserved for those who claimed to speak in tongues. Using Scripture and a theory of history, they rejected tongues-speaking. They acknowledged it as a gift that came in the era of the initial spread of the gospel recorded in Acts, but insisted that it had ended during that era. Since it was no longer needed, the demonstrations of glossolalia in the twentieth-century were relegated to either a drummed up ecstasy explainable by human psychology or as the work of the Devil to deceive and distract Christians. Forty years ago, anyone giving signs of ecstatic utterance would usually be whisked out of the sanctuary and brought up for church discipline.

This overreaction against some excesses of the Pentecostal movement points to another aspect of the rationalism of the Baptists of my upbringing. By challenging what some would call the freedom of the Holy Spirit, they revealed, or perhaps intensified, a deeper theological characteristic. The Holy Spirit was somewhat diminished in their theology. As pietists, they

knew the Holy Spirit's power to convict of sin and draw persons toward conversion. They also had a sense of the Holy Spirit as a guide in discipleship. Influenced by the revival movement, they tended to see evangelism as training people in the proper execution of methods which had been shown to effectively lead people to conversion, with the Holy Spirit as a supporting actor. Some of us joke that they believed in the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Bible. They seemed to fear that too much emphasis on the Holy Spirit might lead them astray.

Rejecting enthusiasm and ecstasy in worship also reflects a certain way of constructing whiteness as respectability. These white Baptists would find many of the same problems in both Pentecostalism and their stereotype of black church worship. "Black church" for them was bothersome in its participatory enthusiasm. The split personality of Southern Baptists included the heritage of the awakenings with their lore of dramatic conversions, and their Calvinist Puritan roots which stress doctrinal and ecclesial order. Thus, a culturally preserved memory wistfully, but only partially, admired the worship of black churches. The old days of long worship services, testimonials, songs initiated from the congregation, and call and response sermons, had been replaced by services which begin and end on time, confined to one hour, and led by professional clergy. As they saw it, one never knew what might happen in a black church service, including shouting, dancing, and other bodily demonstrations of enthusiasm. Formation in this tradition of white Baptists left one with the clear impression that black Baptists were defective in their expression of the faith.

My scholarly training included learning about the growth of black churches as the invisible institution. Although denied the opportunity to learn to read, blacks in the colonies and

then in the U. S. converted to Christianity in great numbers during the awakenings of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Contrary to my upbringing, it was not their careful reading and study of the Biblical texts that led them to knowledge of God. They relied more on hearing the Scriptures and gaining insight through the presence and partnership of the Holy Spirit. This went against my understanding of the way to know the will of God or to receive God's guidance, which was based on trying to develop skill in reading the Bible. Removal of uncertainty was supposed to come from identifying multiple texts as principles and precedents for action and remaining skeptical of imaginative insights unless they could be convincingly tied to a Biblical text.

As I reflected on this discontinuity, I came to realize that for most of the history of the church, the vast majority of Christians were not literate and did not have access to written texts of the Bible. Moreover, in my advanced training I had come to acknowledge that imaginative preconceptions about the Bible already largely determine what a reader finds when reading it. If we were taking a longer class on hermeneutics, I could use the work of James McClendon, John Howard Yoder, J. Deotis Roberts, Cheryl Sanders, Latin American liberation theologians, Frederick Herzog, Nicholas Lash, and other reputable scholars, along with a few disreputable scholars from the Ekklesia Project, to give a theoretical articulation of how my understanding of hermeneutics has been transformed through the pilgrimage of faith on which I am traveling. But that is for another day.

Having identified the example of Turner and his influence on me, I am combining the reflective and embodied work of hermeneutics, the understanding and performing of the



Scriptures, in the setting of pursuing the call to be one people as God is one. I want now to turn to describing the specific practice of Bible reading.

### **Learning to Read**

If you have a Bible, you may want to turn to Luke 18:1-8. If you do not, it is a familiar passage in which Luke reports a story told by Jesus about a widow who sought justice by going repeatedly before an unjust judge. It ends with a pointed question: When the Son of Man comes, will he find faithfulness on the earth? That text is the background for the remainder of this presentation.

From the earliest age, I was taught to sing, “Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so.” We sang about God’s love for us, our love for God, and obeying God by loving others. A great deal of the gospel came through those songs. We sang them at home, and we sang them at church. We listened to Bible stories and learned to say short quotations from the Bible, such as “God is Love,” or “Love one another,” or “Honor your father and mother.” We sang songs about Bible characters and stories. “Only a boy named David . . .,” but he was used by God to save the sheep and the people. “Round the walls of Jericho” the people walked, and when they shouted, “the walls fell down.” “Zaccheaus was a wee, little man,” but Jesus found him and went to his house. “A helper I will be,” “Praise God all ye little children,” and “I like to go to church” were songs that helped to shape our developing moral vision. “Love one another. Love one another. This is the happy way. . . .”

Another thing I learned from Southern Baptists as I grew older was that the main message of faith was for people to have Jesus in our hearts. We called it accepting Jesus as

Savior. This core teaching was a partial articulation of the gospel message. Sometimes we got glimpses of the fullness of the gospel. But mostly we were too focused on the afterlife, and not enough focused on what the message of God's Kingdom might mean for changing the world we live in. Part of our heritage, mostly unstated, was that we did not want to see some kinds of changes, especially concerning race relations. It was a mostly individualistic message about making peace with one's situation and being assured of eternity with God. It put a heavy emphasis on being happy because God is with us. God could work in our lives to help us do what is right, to help us with emotional struggles, and to help us do our best. We were confident that with faith in God and with striving our best, there would be a reasonable expectation of success in life.

It was the age of the Cold War, when the nuclear arms race was at a frenzied pace. Everything that happened in the world was judged by its relation to the worldwide struggle between the Soviet Union and its allies and the United States and its allies. People in this country had to be careful what we thought and said. Any questioning of the goodness and rightness of the American way was automatically judged to be a sign of the influence of godless communism. We were told, even intimidated into believing, that the order of things in the USA was for the good of us all. Of course, you know by looking at me and by the history of the Southern Baptists, that we found this more believable because we were white, and for the most part, the deck was stacked in our favor.

So it is no surprise that when I read or listened to the parable at the beginning of Luke 18, I thought that the judge, the one Jesus calls "the unjust judge," was an anomaly, a rare case. I

knew that police officers could give you a ticket for speeding, and for that reason they might be feared, but for the most part, I was satisfied to believe that law enforcement and the judicial system were to be trusted. Therefore, the parable seemed to me to be an odd way of talking about prayer. To my teen-aged and young adult mind, it seemed to be saying to keep on praying for something even if it seems like God is saying, “No,” to the prayer. Just like the sorry old judge in the story finally came through, God might come through, too, after a while.

I’ll admit, it was pretty weak theology, but then again, most of the theology of prayer that I hear in Bible study and preaching is pretty weak, if not completely off base. When we treat prayer as some kind of input-output machine, a time to beg for our wish list, a visit to the great heavenly Wal-Mart, a test of our positive thinking skill, we are about as far from Christian faith as we can be. But since that was and still is the popular view of prayer in many churches, it’s not surprising that I did not stop to think very hard about this story. Keep on praying. Keep on praying. It is an important basic truth. What this interpretation leaves out is reflection on how to pray. Learning to read the Bible in larger segments than one verse or a few isolated verses is the skill that I still needed to acquire. Yet that skill alone would not make me a good Bible reader.

The reason I am telling a story about my upbringing is to demonstrate that, for better or for worse, we learn to read scripture in community. Before I even knew how to read at all, I had already learned what the Bible says. “Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so.” How did the Bible tell me? It was not by my looking at a page and reading John 3:16. It was not because I had studied the sentence structures and narrative structures of biblical texts. The Bible was telling me through the people who had taught me about it. The Bible was telling me through

the people who had known Jesus' love for a long time, through hard times and good times. By the time I learned to decipher letters and words on a page, I had already learned to read the Bible as a love letter from God to humanity. This basic message of the love of God, recounted to us in the stories of Israel, made manifest for us in the life, work, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and poured out in our lives by the Holy Spirit, stands at the heart of what almost all churches teach about the Christian faith. When churches are doing what they are called to do, children learn that they live in a world created, sustained, and loved by God. And many of us learned to read the Bible that way when we were very young.

Of course, reading abilities and reading subject matter change as we grow. Much of what we need to know can be learned in kindergarten, but those basic ways have to be enlarged, expanded, and enriched as our social, mental, and emotional capacities grow. New experiences, whether joyful or hurtful, may prepare us to read with greater maturity. Yet as we keep reading, we cannot lean only on our own understanding. We must acknowledge God. Acknowledging God means recognizing that God is at work in the world. God is before us and behind us, above us and below us, within and without. Jonathan Edwards said that the Christian stance toward God and God's creation is "consent." As the gospel song puts it, it is to "say, 'Yes,' to God. "I'll say, 'Yes, Lord. Yes,' to your will and to your way." I consent to your presence in all that I encounter. Don't go running ahead of me there. I did not say that everything I encounter is the will of God. Everything may happen for a reason, but not every reason is from God, but not God's reason. A bullet taking a life is not God's time.

Saying “Yes” to God is learning to listen to God speak through others. Saying “Yes” to God is listening to the Spirit speak through each person as we gather for Bible study and worship. Learning to read the Bible requires us to read in community. God’s great mission of love to the world is far too vast for any one of us to grasp alone. That is why Paul told the Corinthian church to take their time in trying to discern what God would say to them. Let one speak, and all others listen attentively. Then let another speak. Listen to one another, and seek the Spirit’s leading. Reading the Bible well means letting go of our private interpretations so that they can be tested in community. Sometimes the process breaks down, but that only makes it all the more important to keep working on it. Of course, the process of discernment can be hindered by the boundaries we place on the communities in which we read.

One way to keep working on reading in community is to keep opening our doors to hear what others might have to say. I had the privilege of traveling to visit congregations and ministries a few years ago, including the Ekklesia Project, Grace Fellowship Community Church, Church of the Sojourners, Lawndale Community Church, Circle Urban Ministries, Bethel New Life Ministries, St. Paul’s Community Baptist Church, Latino Pastoral Action, the John Perkins Foundation, and many more. I learned much from them about how communities read the scriptures in ways that transform their neighborhoods and their relationships across ethnic and racial divisions.

I have spent some time reflecting on the way that the Open Door Community in Atlanta reads the scriptures. When I asked about interviewing one or more of their leaders about their approach to ministry, they invited me to join them in feeding breakfast to the homeless as a first

step. I showed up very early and found quite a few people at work getting breakfast ready. I was given an orientation, then we gathered in a circle to study the Bible. We spent about fifteen minutes looking at a passage, going over the background and a few key points, then we prayed and started serving the meal. After an hour and a half, we had served well over a hundred people. We did the basic cleaning up, then sat down to eat our own breakfast. Over the meal, a racially mixed group of members of the community, along with some of the homeless persons, and various volunteers, returned to discussing the scripture passage. Reading the Bible with homeless people shed a new light on it. People who had not lived their lives in the comfort and privilege of the middle class saw details of the scripture to which some of us were blind.

The Latin American liberation theologians had also come to recognize this truth as they sought to understand the Bible while they observed the impending demise of the era of European world domination. They saw that reading the Bible with the poor and marginalized masses, created by colonial domination, gave a whole new meaning to the life and work of Jesus. As Howard Thurman had, they came to see that this one often depicted as a remote, cosmic monarch had lived as a homeless Jewish man who had no place to lay his head, who hung out with the folks on the margin and at the bottom, who was part of an oppressed ethnic group, and who had good news to give to them.

*Who we read with* makes all the difference. By now I hope you realize why it is important to tell you about my Southern Baptist upbringing. I learned to read the Bible among middle-class whites. They saw some of what the Bible says, but missed many other things. I am focusing on Luke 18 because it played a pivotal role in my experience of reading in community.

For instance, I don't know that I ever saw verse 8 as an integral part of the rhetorical structure of the parable in my early training and even into adulthood, so I probably never gave it much thought until many years later. My attention was first drawn to this verse during one of the most difficult periods of my life as a follower of Jesus. I was a leader in an integrated, predominately white Baptist congregation, but there were rumblings of racial unrest. An older generation of church members was unhappy with the results of desegregation in their church. It was a time in which I found myself questioning whether most, or even any, congregations or denominations in contemporary U. S. society and culture had any right to claim the name church. The pastor, in an effort to get the church to go deeper in our discipleship, had urged us to form study groups and follow a widely used curriculum for church renewal.

In the midst of that study, I came across Luke 18:8, and it struck me as the question of the age. I had been given the opportunity of reading in community with whites and blacks, but the overwhelming division of U. S. churches by race and ethnicity was challenging my previous understanding of the Bible. The question haunted me. "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faithfulness on the earth?" What if Jesus comes looking for me? Will Jesus find faithfulness? Will my church be showing its faith in a way that is recognizable to the Lord?

Learning to read also requires letting *the context in which we read* enlighten the text. I knew that following Jesus and living a life shaped by the way of Jesus, being disciples, was what churches are called to do. But there is a deeper question to ask about the contemporary ecclesial context: how does discipleship take shape in a world of white domination? As I tried to compare the ideals following Jesus with the scandal of white supremacy, with the wound of

racism, I found that my settled and secure beliefs about the church were being shaken.

Ultimately, I found myself, along with others, seeking for God in exile from that congregation, wandering in a wilderness of longing. I knew better than to look for a perfect church. I was just hoping to find one that was not fighting tooth and nail over whether to accept or deny the gospel of reconciliation.

It was a few months later when I was sitting in Mt. Level Missionary Baptist Church, as a new member, that I heard this passage in Luke 18 brought up along the way in a sermon. I was eager to reflect on it further, so I turned to the text in my Bible and began to read and reflect on it. Once again the Holy Spirit shed new light on the scripture. As I sat in a congregation of mostly African Americans, my white body in proximity to their black bodies, my family and cultural heritage laid out alongside theirs, I heard this story in a whole new light.

I perceived that for African American Bible readers, it was no surprise to encounter the character of an unjust judge who has no fear of God and no respect for anyone. As many others here have, I had watched video footage of the rigged system of injustice that protected white assassins from being convicted of murdering blacks during the Civil Rights Movement. I had read Ida Wells's accounts of lynch law and the precarious existence of blacks who might seek to improve their economic condition when the legal system was not set up for their good. I had heard of this context, but I had not walked in it. For the first time, I was learning to read the Bible with that history as my own history, too. It was no longer a separate set of events, unrelated to the Bible.



Now decentered from a white middle-class vision, the entire parable began to take clearer shape as addressing the nature of prayer. In light of reading in community, it becomes clear that the parable is not primarily a message for consumers in a consumer society who consume God and want God to help them consume more stuff. While one aspect of the parable's message may be that we are encouraged to keep on praying, the core emphasis seems more on clarifying what sort of God it is to whom we are praying. God is *not* like this judge. The judge is at best an antihero—he plays a role in something good happening, despite his obvious flaws. Or perhaps the judge is merely a villain. Jesus tells the disciples who are listening to pay attention to the contrast. God is not anything like that judge. If a sorry old reprobate judge like that can be persuaded to do something right, what do you think you could expect from a good and loving God? So don't lose heart. Keep the faith. Pray on. And be faithful to what God has called you to do.

Moreover, it is not just any kind of praying that the parable is concerned with. It is not about whether I can get a bigger house or a fancier car. It is not about whether I get my picture in the paper or my name gets called out for recognition in public meetings. It is about justice.

The other character is not a widow by chance. Jesus was concerned about how women were being treated by the so-called righteous religious folk of his day. Widows might have no protectors, and they had very few ways to make a living that were acceptable and respectable. They deserved better, and the law had some provisions which could help them. But from a position of social isolation and weakness, they might not be treated humanely or even according to the law. Perhaps no one would even bother to listen. The unjust judge was probably a

recognizable character to the people gathered around Jesus that day. Now where was Jesus in this story? Was he in Chicago, Illinois, or Philadelphia, Mississippi, or Orange County, California, or Jena, Louisiana, or Durham, North Carolina? All these places can be found along the road on his journey to Jerusalem.

I had learned long before, as a ministerial student, that Luke's gospel is reputed to be concerned for the equal place of women before God and in the church. Now in this parable, one more example of that is clear. The judge does not respect anyone. God, on the other hand, loves even the lowly and marginalized. The judge just wants the widow to leave him alone. God wants the widow to have life abundant. The judge acts for expediency and personal comfort. God acts for justice.

A Christian education curriculum that neglects the liberating justice of God toward women is a curriculum that has not learned to read the Bible.

So the prayers that we must always pray without fainting are prayers for justice. We must pray for justice for the poor. We must pray for justice for the prisoner. We must pray for justice for the worker, justice for the violated, justice for the outcast, justice for the widow and orphan. But they must not be empty prayers or prayers of mere obligation and observance. They must be prayers of opening ourselves to God's work in our lives. The result of such prayers is to be our faithfulness in building relationships with the poor, the prisoner, the worker, the violated, the outcast, the widow, and the orphan.

We will become the instruments of God to answer those who cry out day and night. We will become the instruments of God to help them without delay. We will be the instruments to quickly grant justice to them.

Learning to read the Bible means learning to pray as God would have us pray. Yes, learning to read the Bible means learning to perform the scriptures. Put them in action. Yes, act them out. Don't just soak up the teaching—live the teaching. Perform the scriptures. Don't be mere hearers of the word. Be doers of the word. Love in deed and truth. Love one another. Let love be genuine, so that when the Son of Man comes, it will not be hard to find faithfulness on the earth.

It is still far too rare that people to break through the structures that organize and place our bodies, the formation that steers us away from one another, and the consciousness, semi-consciousness, and unconsciousness of race that stand in the way of our being able to worship together. As Beth Newman has argued, the hospitality of sharing peace, the Lord's table, a song, the sacred text, and the prayerful conversation with God are the very core of living as God's people. That we do these things on Sundays or other days is parabolic of what God is calling the church to embody in every part of our lives. And when we do, we bear witness to the oneness, and ultimately to the catholicity, of the church.

Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, "Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine of the Church," (July 10, 2007), HYPERLINK "[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20070629\\_responsa-quaestiones\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html)" [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20070629\\_responsa-quaestiones\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html) (accessed June 9, 2008).

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