

Ut unum sint.

Föredrag vid seminarium om Enhet – glädje över mångfalden eller konsensusraseri?
19 februari 2007.

I want to point at the very essence of faith. The very essence is not an activity in the brains but in the heart. It has not to do with doctrines but with feelings.

Johannes 21: 15 – 17

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to him: Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. Jesus said to him: feed my lambs.

A second time he said to him: Simon, son of John, do you love me? He said to him: Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. Jesus said to him: tend my sheep.

He said to him the third time: Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time: do you love me? And he said to him: Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him: feed my sheep.

Simon, son of John do you love me?

Not: Simon, son of John, do you believe in the real presence in the communion?

Not: do you believe that only Jews can belong to my flock?

Not: do you believe that those who don't believe like you shall constitute a community of their own?

Not: do you believe that the doctrine of reconciliation is separating true believers from false believers in that way that those false believers are excluded from the community?

Not: should those who listen to me but not recognize me as the son of God be excluded?

Not: do you believe in priesthood for males only?

Not: do you believe that the bishop of Rome will be superior in the flock?

Not at all Do you believe.... The only concern is Do you love me?

We divide and separate with human interpretations as the dividing line. Jesus wants us to gather with love as a unifying power.

The problem is that the institutional Church comes between us and Jesus and separates us. But the institutional Church too easily becomes filled with self-righteousness. We are not chosen to be the servants to the Church but the servants of Christ. And the Church is sent into the world to be a servant of Christ, an instrument for promoting love.

We need the Church. We need institutions in this world. But we need a permanent reformation, a reformation which consists of the question: do we as Church love Christ? Or do we love our traditions more than Christ? Our interpretations?

Two memories:

1. one of you present here has according to my interpretation and my opinion made a wrong interpretation of the gospel claiming that only men can be priests. We have debated this in public for almost 40 years now. I can't understand why he, who loves Jesus almost as much as I, not can be accepted in the community. Why those sharing his opinion are regarded as second range priests. They have made a wrong interpretation, yes, but we must have the right to be wrong and still be part of the community. You can't say that they don't believe in Christ or that they don't love Christ.

I also can't understand why this person once said to me that if I regard his interpretation as false it would be consequent that I tried to expel him from Church.

This is another misinterpretation of the Gospel. If the Church should consist only of those who believe correctly, and if my interpretation is the criterion, then there will at last be a Church consisting of me only and the Lord.

Which one of us has the right interpretation of the nature of Christ? Which one can say that his or her interpretation is the only true one?

I'm sure that we have among us those who regard the death on the cross and the resurrection as the most important part of their faith in Jesus, but I'm also sure of that some think that well well, maybe he did it, but I can't see the meaning for my personal life of this sacrifice, and his suffering was by no

means greater than many others, in Auschwitz, in Srebrenica, in other manifestations of inhumanity and satanism, and for me his magnificence lies in his words.

He was a true rabbi who revealed the heavenly treasures, especially in the Beatitudes and the other words in the Sermon on the Mount, and when he prayed from the cross for those who had nailed him. Which one of us has the right interpretation?

2. The dioceses of Karlstad and Rome became linked to each other in the beginning of the 90ies. I once in the sacristy came into a discussion with the roman catholic priests whether I should receive communion or not in the service we were planning. We ended by saying that Jesus would laugh at us if he heard us. And we laughed. And I received communion. Afterwards I've thought that maybe Jesus wouldn't laugh, he would cry.

It is a denial of the Sacrament of unity when we let only those who belong to a certain Church to receive communion. It is a grave misinterpretation and a heresy. The interpretation of a single Church becomes more important than the love to Christ.

And who can guarantee that you, because that you belong to a certain Church, share it's interpretation? Who can deny that there are believers in one Church who have more in common with believers in another Church than they have with believers in their own Church?

There are parishes in the Church of Sweden that have difficulties with the members of the free Churches. I will not go too deep into this but I will only say that you can't say that the members of the free Churches don't love Christ. I find it awkward that we have difficulties with people from other Churches than our when we come to eucharist or using churches for funerals. Who owns a church? We or God? Who can decide whether or not someone else does or doesn't love and respect Jesus? Who knows what it means to love and respect Christ? Where is the place of the muslims and jews in this set of problems? How do we find a clue to the living together with all those who respect Jesus but don't look upon him in the same way as I do? I think there is only one way – see each other as human beings and listen to each others interpretations.

This does not mean that the questions of right and wrong interpretations are unimportant but the contrary. It is more a question of respect and humility in confrontation with the interpretations of others. And a fostering of love when we meet and talk and listen to each other. With the loving heart we explain our own faith and listen to others.

We don't exclude others because of diverse interpretations, but we don't capitulate either, and the fact that I show respect to a person or am friend with him does not mean that I share his or her interpretations. And it is not a sign of lacking love or lacking respect that I stand up for my opinion. Rather it is a sign of lacking love and lacking respect when I declare that I can't pray together or be together in the same room as someone else because I don't like what this person has said or done.

There was a strong tension and a fight in faith in Antioch between Peter and Paul. They still belonged to the community.

They both loved Jesus.

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