

Dear Friends,

During my visit to Poland to celebrate my 40th anniversary of ordination with my ordination class, I noticed a deep division among people. I did not experience that kind of division before. We think that we are divided in this country, but the truth is that there is deep division in every country and it is getting worse. Everywhere we see polarization, people divided from each other by ideology, politics, economic theory, moral beliefs, and theology. We have the left and the right opposing each other, liberals and conservatives at odds, pro-life competing with pro-choice. We do not agree almost on every social and moral issue - the position of women, climate change, gender issues, sexuality, marriage and family as institutions, the role of government, how the LGBTQ community is to be understood, and so on.



Our churches are not exempt; too often we cannot agree on anything. Civility and respect has disappeared from public debate even within our churches. We cannot discuss openly any sensitive matter, even within our own families. Therefore, we discuss politics, religion, and values only with people who have the same ideological ideas. We have stopped challenging each other and instead have resentful debates. It leads us to become even more intolerant, bitter, and judgmental. Scripture calls this enmity and hatred, and indeed, this is its proper name. We are becoming hate-filled people who justify our hatred on political, religious and moral grounds.

Why do we have such deep division? The Holy Scripture tells us the father of division is Satan. It started long time ago, in Paradise, as we see in today's first reading, that he brought division between God and people. He also brought division between the people, with Adam blaming Eve for his fall. The question is – what can we do to remove division? I truly believe that as long as we think that people can bring unity, we are deceiving ourselves. Each individual can think “I have the answer” and following “my way” will bring unity – but in reality, it will not. What is needed is nothing else but religious conversion, a religious change of heart.

The answer to unity is in understanding of the cross of Jesus. St. Paul in the Letter to the Ephesians tells us that Jesus broke down the barrier of hostility that existed between communities **“by reconciling both [sides] in one body through his cross, which put that enmity to death.”** (Ephesians 2, 16) How does the cross of Christ put enmity to death? Not through some kind of magic. The death of Jesus on the cross is something to imitate, not just to admire. What are we to imitate? What Jesus did in his passion and death was to transform bitterness and division rather than to give back in kind. In the love which he showed in his passion and death, Jesus took hatred, transformed it, and gave back love. This is the only key to overcome division. We need to strive for this. In the gospel today, Jesus tells us what is going to happen if people keep being divided, **“If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.”** May we all seek to imitate Jesus in unity and love.

Peace,
Fr. Krzysztof