

## **Homily on Reconciliation and Community in Christ**

**(A Meditation and Presentation on St. John Chrysostom's Homily on 1 Timothy 1: 15-17)**

**1 Timothy 1: 15-17**

*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

**Hypothesis: That God wants us to be one as He and the Father are one, and that HIS DESIRE IS ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH HIS CHURCH. (Scientific analogy suggested by both my own training and the sermon of St. John Chrysostom]**

Primary Proof text: John 17:21-23 *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

**Why is this hypothesis important? Our salvation is in community, in Christ. It is the way to our salvation, and the salvation of this God-Protected Community.**

**Rebuild Community? Grow? This is how. Happiness and joy? This is how. Forgiveness? Ditto.**

**Test the hypothesis: The Apostle Paul provides a hard case. If you successfully test a hypothesis with a hard case, the assumption is that easier tests will also succeed. If you can lift 100 lbs, you can also lift 20 lbs.**

**[Describe the life of the "Persecutor Paul" before he became the Apostle and saint.]**

**And yet he was saved. Because HE WAS THE 100<sup>th</sup> SHEEP (Parable of the Lost Sheep, Luke 15:3-7). Christ brought Paul back. Forgave Him, and gave him a full portion of his inheritance. St. Paul's letter to Timothy sums up this situation.**

**But what of the community? [discuss the probable distrust, the grudges – rightly earned!]**

**How was it that THEY also accepted Paul as one of their own? He had persecuted their very best! Malicious. Self-righteous. But they took him back. There is only ONE way this super-human forgiveness can be accomplished: through Christ. Because Christ provides both the pattern AND THE STRENGTH. St. Peter, one of those who had to decide how to treat with Paul, describes the solution thusly:**

1 Peter 2:21-25 *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

**St. Paul presented a hard case. Christ accepted him. The Church accepted him. St. Paul went on to great glory and good works in the Church.**

**We also have been that lost sheep, the "first among sinners", but Christ reaches out to us nonetheless. So that we might be saved, and being saved might do the same for those around us.**

**May Christ, through the prayers of St. Paul, give us the strength to accomplish His will.**