

# From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

## THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY

Text: "For the Church is His Body and in that Body Lives Fully the One Who Fills the Whole Wide Universe." Eph. 1:22,23.

SOME TIME AGO, I heard a man prominently associated with one of our leading Protestant Churches say, "I don't think God really cares whether you belong to a Church or not." That statement brought me up short. Such an idea is frequently expressed outside the Christian Community. But when you hear it within the Church, it is time for us to examine the implications of such a statement and ask ourselves if we know the REAL meaning of the Christian family that we call the Church.

The New Testament most certainly fails to recognize SOLITARY Christians, unattached as it were to the Christian fellowship. While you and I possibly could

pride ourselves on being good INDIVIDUALS in the Christian sense, we would know nothing of the Christian faith that binds us to the Christ-body if it were not for the continuing fellowship of the Christian Church. Without the Church, we might very easily direct our worship toward self-righteousness--God Himself.

It also may be said that too many of us think of the Church in terms of temporal or worldly impermanence rather than in terms of spiritual immortality. The Church is far more than any mere building or human leader. Buildings may crumble and perish from the face of the earth. Man lives his appointed days and then his ashes are returned to dust. But the Church lives on forever in the continuing fellowship of God and man.

Let each of us make sure that we are not worshipping a building, or a person, rather than Almighty God!

WHEN WE TRULY become members of the fellowship of the Church, we are not joining a building, or a minister, or a center of social activity. The Christian Church "is His Body" and is not free to follow each and every intellectual and quasi-spiritual fad that comes upon the horizon. The Church is unalterably rooted in Christian tenets and principles prescribed by the Master of the "whole wide universe."

The Church is not an accommodating institution. It is we who must accommodate ourselves to Christian convictions and Christian beliefs and the Christian way of life as spelled out in the Scriptures if we are to regard ourselves as real Christians. And these requirements do not change from minister to minister, or from generation to generation. True ministers of the Gospel may describe the abiding truth about God in different language from generation to generation, depending upon different situations that must be met and lived with, but the Word of God, from God, remains constant and unchangeable.

We are gathered together within the Church as sheep within the fold, in common Christian faith and devotion to the Christian's Lord and Master, the Shepherd of the flock, Jesus Christ. Having made the Christian choice, having accepted the great Christian convictions, and having found in Christ our Lord and Saviour, we are inevitably drawn together with those of like experience and understanding into the human-divine fellowship we call "the Church."

PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH know that behind and within life on earth is the Heavenly Spirit of God. We can see that God Himself has chosen to depend upon us, through our faith in His righteousness (and not through our own self-righteousness), for the fulfillment of His divine purpose. We can sense our own mortal inadequacies, that without His guidance and undergirding we are not enough; but we also come to understand that His power and influence is working in us for our own good. In short, we



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see the Christian way to be the basic nature and meaning of a good life.

The New Testament speaks of the fellowship of people who are the Church, and the Church as being the Body of Christ.

We know that a living body is composed of countless, individual cells. All of us may well regard ourselves as individual cells of the body that is the Church, which is in turn the Body of Christ. Through this human-divine link, we find the Spirit of Christ moving through us to recreate and perpetuate the living Church.

It is at this point that many who call themselves Christians, who claim membership in the Christian Church and thus associate themselves with the Body of Christ and his Holy Spirit, fail to fulfill the requirements of this human-divine relationship. Too many would remain isolated cells--"solitary Christians"--divorced from the continuing fellowship of the other countless cells that make up the living Church. This could eventually lead to the self-righteous conclusion that, "I don't think God really cares whether you belong to a Church or not."

Why should we be timid about admitting--indeed, exulting--that we attempt to live Christian lives within the framework of the Church; that we belong to the Christian fellowship that is committed to the will of God?

UNTIL THIS TIMIDITY, this self-consciousness, is rooted out, many will always wonder why the spiritual serenity of those who accept Christian fellowship is denied them despite their self-righteous protestations to being individually good Christians. And until they in fact become members of the Christian family

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(All Churches of God in Christ)

Bible Band: Tuesday, 8 pm  
\*Young People: Wednesday, 8 pm  
Consecration: Friday, 8 pm  
Sunday School: Sunday, 10 am  
Morning Service: Sunday, 12 noon  
YPW: Sunday, 8 pm  
(\*Inspirational at Progressive)

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Sunday Masses: 11 am and 5 pm  
Weekday Masses: 7:30 am; Saturday, 9 am  
Holyday Masses: 9:30 am and 7:30 pm  
Confessions: Saturday, 4-4:30 and 7:30-8 pm  
Adult Classes: Monday and Friday, 7:30 pm  
Child Classes: Monday, 4-5 pm; Saturday, 9-10:30 am  
Rosary: Daily, 7:30 pm except Sundays

### PENTECOSTAL

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as a whole--the Church--you may be sure that their puny, individual impact upon a society that desperately needs to be brought under the influence of Christian fellowship is of no consequence.

The Church has been called, for good reason, the guardian and perpetuator of the "sacred" practices and experiences that lie beyond human stewardship. The most significant happening in any community, in any week, is the Church's conduct of public worship of God. It is this communion with the Heavenly Father that provides an opportunity to examine ourselves, our words and deeds, in the light of Christ's teachings and God's presence and purpose. It is here we find forgiveness, re-creation and reassurance of God's grace. It is here, in the fellowship of the Church, that we can cast aside meaningless fears and despair.

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