

Homily Given At Archdiocese Convention by Very Rev. Fr. John Henderson
Montreal, Canada 2007

In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The theme of our convention this year relates to the unity of the Church. This week you will hear a number of homilies dealing with this topic. My homily today relates to Psalm 133:1, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Verse 2 of this Psalm is prayed by the priest when he puts on his epitrachelion referring to the consecrated oil poured over Aaron when he was set apart as the first high priest of Israel.

Now we know that Israel prefigured the Church and that Aaron prefigured, under the Old Covenant, Christ as our High Priest under the New Covenant. Even though God had chosen the Hebrew nation as His people and promised to lead them to the Holy Land, many among them worshipped false gods and rebelled against the Lord and His prophets and endured exile and much suffering. In contrast to this, the Psalmist tells us that it is a pleasant thing for God's people in the True Israel, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, to agree together. The same word which is translated as "pleasant" in Hebrew is also used in reference to a harmony of music. And this same word is also used to refer to the sweetness of honey. So, the unity of the Church is harmonious, melodious and sweet.

But we must understand that true unity within the Church flows from the perfect communion of Love which exists within the Holy Trinity. Revelation 21:3 refers to this as "the dwelling of God among men." United under our Bishop in the Apostolic Faith, we experience the joy, hope, peace and certainty of the Life of God in the Kingdom of God – our Promised Land. In the fear of God, may we hunger and thirst after the love for God and each other and lay aside our opinions which divide us. God will have a people for his own possession for all eternity – a people of one mind and heart. As God's people, we have a mission in this world which cannot be fulfilled if we are divided.

In I Corinthians 1:11, St. Paul wrote, "It has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you." Roughly 40 years later, Clement, who was the bishop of Rome at the time, wrote to this same church in Corinth which was still suffering from divisive and contentious individuals. This is what he said to them, "Among you then, who is noble, who is compassionate, who is really loving? Let him say, 'If it is because of me that rebellion and strife have arisen, I will leave. I will go wherever you wish. I will do whatever the congregation commands. Only let the flock of Christ live at peace with its appointed elders.' The man who does this will win for himself great fame in Christ and will be welcome everywhere. This has been and always will be the practice of those who follow God's way of life that brings no regrets."