

## **A reading from the commentary of St Cyril of Alexandria on St John's Gospel**

We can learn from Saint Paul's words concerning the mystery of religion that those who share in Christ's sacred flesh also gain unity, by which I mean the unity of the body, which is unity with Christ: "...the mystery, which was made known to the sons of men in other generations has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus."

If then we are all members of the same body with one another in Christ, and not only with one another but also assuredly with him, since he is in us through his own flesh, why is not our unity with one another and with Christ more evident? For Christ is the bond that unites us, since he is both God and man.

With regard to our unity in the Spirit, I shall follow the same line of reasoning and say again to begin with that we have all received one and the same Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and so in a certain sense are mingled with one another and with God. For although, taken individually, we are many, and in each of us there dwells the Spirit of the Father who is also the Spirit of Christ, nevertheless this Spirit is one and indivisible. According to his peculiar mode of being, through himself he binds together into a unity all the spirits that are broken off from the common unity, and in himself he makes all men appear again as one.

For just as the power of the sacred flesh unites in one body all who receive it, so too, I maintain, the one Holy Spirit is not divided among all those in whom he has come to dwell, but brings all men to a spiritual unity.

Accordingly Saint Paul again addresses these words to us: "Forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Lord and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." For since one Spirit dwells within us, the one Father of all will be in us as our God, holding together through his Son, with one another and with him, all who share in the Spirit.

Another consideration will help us to show that we are united through sharing in the Holy Spirit. If we put aside the natural way of life, and surrender once and for all to the laws of the Spirit, it is incontrovertible that, by denying, in a sense, our own life and assuming the heavenly form of the Holy Spirit so that he becomes woven into our being, we are transformed, so to speak, into another nature. We are no longer just men but sons of God; we receive the name of heavenly men because we are made partakers of the divine nature.

Therefore we are all one in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit - one in identity of relationship, one in likeness revealed in devotion, and one in receiving the holy flesh of Christ and in sharing the one Holy Spirit.