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Unity in the Holy Spirit Feast of St. Matthew Monday, September 21, 2015 8:15 AM
Eph 4:1-7, 11-13; Mt 9:9-13 (We strive to maintain unity through our humility and our patience and our forbearance through the bond of peace.)

In the Letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul or his disciple—it's possible St. Paul himself did not write this letter because he may have been dead already when this letter was composed—but it was written by someone trained by St. Paul at least. Anyway, there is this vision of **Christ coming to full stature**. It's very important to keep this vision in mind because **it involves us**. Christ is not going to come to full stature without the people who believe in him. **It's through the faith within people and their participation with Christ in hope and love that Christ actually grows**. This is the vision here. Christ is growing in stature. He is becoming bigger, more at large in the world, **through believers**. And perhaps not only through believers, but **through those who seek God**, because he was very clear: if you seek God, you will find God.

And since he is God, then in a way **people who seek God are finding Christ**. And that's how we understand in a very expansive way the statement found in John's Gospel: **"No one comes to the Father except through me."** But of course the "me" is **the risen Christ**, not simply the man who lived two thousand years ago, but the risen Christ **who is now ministering to all people who seek God**. We would like to say all people, period, but we are not sure, so all people who seek God.

This is a growing reality, but it cannot grow unless we grow in our awareness of Christ, in whose image we are fashioned, whose work we are given in some form or another. So here are a few mentioned: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. Well, that's just a handful of ministries. **The number of ministers are not numerable. But they are all**

from the Holy Spirit, and they are to build up and expand the stature of Christ, in our midst, in our world.

And it's supposed to have an effect. And the **effect is** already mentioned earlier: **the unity of the Spirit.** The only way we can have unity is in the Holy Spirit. We can't have unity because we all agree with each other; that is impossible. We can't have unity because we all have the same ideology; that would be frightening. We can't unity because we all want the same thing; that isn't realistic. **We have the unity only in the Holy Spirit. It is a gift.**

Now **it comes, however, with our participation. And where does it start? Humility,** perhaps the most important of all virtues in a certain sense because it's the beginning. It's not all about me. I don't have to have my way. I don't necessarily know what's best. That's humility. And then gentleness, again, a fruit of the Spirit, **gentleness, with patience,** another fruit of the Spirit, **bearing with one another through love,** which is really a fruit of the Spirit. That's a choice and a virtue when it's habitual. **We have to bear with one another.** That doesn't mean we like each other. That doesn't mean we agree with each other; that is not what the Church is about. It's about bearing with one another, **striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit. It comes from the Spirit, but we strive to maintain it through our humility and our patience and our forbearance through the bond of peace.**

Now the world doesn't have a whole lot of peace, in fact, I would say, none. **Peace comes from God.** The world wants to have peace by one group prevailing over another. And until the world converts from that point of view, we will have nothing but war. But this is a different idea. **This is a different idea from what the world has. And it is up to you to bring it to the world.** That's the idea of this letter.