



## Unity is not easy. Unity requires give and take.

**A**s a local Church, unity is more than one goal among many. Unity is essential to our mission. The prayer of Jesus for his disciples on the night before he died was that we might be one: "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17:20-21). The effectiveness of our witness depends on our unity. Nowhere is that unity more important than in our celebrations of the Eucharist.

Unity is not easy. Unity requires give and take. As Pope Benedict XVI has written, "Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians." The intimate sharing with Christ we experience when we participate in the Eucharist and receive Holy Communion is not strictly between God and myself, because the Mass is not an individual devotion but a communal prayer. For this reason, our celebrations of the Eucharist should be marked not by individual expressions of piety, but by unity.

The singing, the spoken responses, and the postures we take during the Mass — standing, bowing, kneeling — are important signs of that unity, and more: They can actually help build the unity we seek.

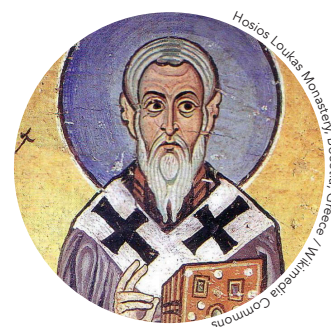
Archbishop Paul D. Etienne

*The Work of Redemption: Eucharistic Belief and Practice in the Archdiocese of Seattle*

Read the whole pastoral letter at [NWCatholic.org](http://NWCatholic.org)

## The Saints and the Eucharist

Pray, then, come and join this choir, every one of you; let there be a holy symphony of minds in concert; take the tone all together from God, and sing aloud to the Father with one voice through Jesus Christ, so that he may hear you and know by your good works that you are indeed members of his Son's Body. A completely united front will help to keep you in constant communion with God... Let no one be under any illusion; a man who excludes himself from the sanctuary is depriving himself of the bread of God, for if prayer of one or two individuals has such efficacy, how much more powerful is that of the bishop together with his whole church.



St. Ignatius of Antioch  
(c. 35-107)

## For Reflection

What unites me with my parish community—with my Catholic family throughout the world?

What gets in the way of unity in the Church today?

Are there ways I can be an instrument of unity in our increasingly polarized world?