

**UNITY, COMMUNION (*KOINONIA*)**  
***Fostering the spiritual unity of Christ's church***  
***And Promoting the Unity of all Christians (ecumenism)***

**From the Pastoral Letter of His Beatitude Sviatoslav**

**Fostering and Serving Unity**

The Acts of the Apostles convey a sense of profound unity which existed among the members of the first community of Christ's disciples: "The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common".(Act 4:32). This spiritual state of being of the first Christian community can be expressed with the term *koinonia* (communion) which conveys unity, harmony and common life. To be Church is to abide in the communion of the Holy Spirit, the grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God the Father. Thus, the unity of the church is an icon of the unity of Persons of the Holy Trinity. This unity can be seen on different levels: on the level of the Universal and Particular Church, the eparchy, and the individual parish. It may happen that through our weakness and sinfulness we do not reflect this unity. Ever aware of this, we all must cherish and foster unity, preserving full communion with the successor of the apostle Peter, the Holy Father, with the hierarchy of our Church, with the local bishops and pastors who act in their name.

The parish is a community of communities. In a parish there will be various prayer groups, brotherhoods, and youth organizations. All of these are called to strengthen unity and love among the members of the parish community. By supporting one another through prayer, by sharing God's gifts and working together in a Christ-like spirit of service, we will be able to bring to life our synodal program: "Holiness of a united people of God." We cannot be indifferent to the fact that the descendants of the Baptism under St. Volodymyr today are divided and estranged from one another. At the Last Supper, Christ prayed to His Heavenly Father for His disciples, "that all may be one" (John 17:21). Bearing in mind these words of Christ, I sincerely ask you all today - let us pray for the unity of the Church, let us pray for the restoration of unity of all the churches of the Kyivan tradition. And above all, in the spirit of the love of Christ, let us make every effort to avoid any words or actions which could damage our brothers and sisters in Christ or offend them. Even though at times we may be subjected to mockery and pressure, let us not give in to the temptation to respond to evil with evil. May Christ's prayer for his wrong-doers and the teaching of the Apostle of the Nations become a testament for us: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (*Rom 12:21*).