In the New Testament lesson that we read earlier, the Apostle Paul compared a group of early Christians from the city of Corinth as “***infants in Christ***”. These were 1st generation Christians who were raised from various cultures or faith traditions, some even no faith at all or worship other pagan gods. The demographic of the early church community was very much resemble many of our churches today, even right here in Homecrest. While many of these so-called “infant” Christians were raised as Jews, others were raised as Gentiles. But they all shared something in common – their professed faith in Jesus Christ.

Like infants who are still being nursed by their mothers, they establish an intimate bond with one another during the early years of development. These spiritual infants of the early church, as Paul described also deserved some extra TLC - Tender, Loving Care as well, just like we do today. Last week, a friend of mine posted a video on her Facebook page of her 4-year old son who has just learned how to ride a bicycle. I was quite impressed with my friend’s son because of his young age and that he was able to ride a two-wheel bicycle (without any training wheels). He was a little dare devil himself and not afraid to fall off. But from time to time, he would still fall off, but as soon as he did, he would simply pick himself back up on his feet and do it all over again. The more he rode the more confident he gets.

 In the same way, when it comes to our spiritual walk, we also need to develop our sense of confidence and lay a solid foundation of our faith. When it comes to our faith, there is no “magical” pill or a crash course that one would take, in order to be an instant Christian. It does take years of equipping, training and preparation, even after one says YES to Christ. God continues to nurture, develop, and shape our spiritual formation throughout our lives.

 Paul compared the early church in Corinth to infants because many of them were still acting like “children”. Children in a sense that they would argue over petty things and trivial matters while compromising the unity of the body. They formed various factions among themselves and claimed their allegiance to their respective leaders. Some say they follow Cephas, some followed Paul while other say they follow Apollo. These early Christians turned their focus of allegiance on the individual leaders instead of acknowledging the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit and Christ as the head of the body. Paul warned them of this slippery slope of compromising their faith priorities and focuses. Many of these spiritual leaders, as Paul described himself, were just planters, waterers, and servants of the seeds, while ultimately it is God who provides the water, the sunshine in order for the growth to take place!

 Incidentally the term “infants” in Greek can also be translated as “seeds” that we plant in the garden. No seeds can grow on its own without someone who would plant, water and nurture. As our passage reminded us earlier, only God enables the growth to take place according to God’s timing. The Book of Ecclesiastes tells us *for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to break down, and a time to build up.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

 But many of these early Christians were more focused jockeying for power and authority among themselves by claiming their allegiance on their respective leaders. Paul reminded the infant church of Corinth and all of us today that ***we are [all] God’s servants, [that] we must work together. We are God’s field and God’s building.[[2]](#footnote-2) For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.[[3]](#footnote-3)***

Unfortunately nowadays we have seen too many churches split and divide among themselves because the members are not grounded in their personal faith and their relationship with God. Their mission priorities were of the earth, focusing on what’s important to human needs, rather than of God’s, while applying our human benchmarks of success rather than God’s will and purpose. They would make critical decisions based on their own personal judgments, rather than prayerfully seeking the common good for all through the work of the Holy Spirit. Their seed of faith was planted in shallow soil, instead of deeply rooting in the Word of God.

**Ministry would only thrive when all of its members are on the same page and share a unified vision, working and striving together as a team rather than individuals.** Many early churches, like the ones in Corinth, as well as many today, struggled with this very same notion of Christian unity, putting Christ’s priorities and missions first before our own.

 I remember when I was an undergraduate engineering student, we had to take a required course in structural engineering and foundation. I still remember one of my professors told us on the very first day of class. He said “**nevermind how tall the building may be, it is only as strong as its foundation”** whether it is on steel piles or on concrete slab.

 **I think the same is true when it comes to our spiritual faith, as Christ laid the foundation of our faith through his teachings and established a new covenant with us.** As scripture tells us that no longer shall we be like *children, [who are being] tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine. But we must speak the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.”[[4]](#footnote-4)* Only when we are rooted in Christ, we can then withstand any storm that might come and try to blow us away.

 From the Old Testament reading that Joseph read for us earlier taken from the Book of *Deuteronomy*, Moses also was sending an important reminder to the Israelites of how they must be grounded in their faith by remember their covenant relationship that God had laid down with the people from many generations. Despite the many quarrels, conflicts, and disagreements among themselves, they were still God’s children and the seeds of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That will never change. At that time, Moses was near the end of his life. He knew it was time for him to pass on the torch so others might succeed him and lead the rest of the way into the Promised Land.

Moses reminded the people that the Word of God – the seed of truth was planted in the people’s hearts, as twice a day the people would recite the *Shema* *“Hear, O Israel: the* [*LORD*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YHVH) *our God, the LORD is one”* (once in the morning and once at night) dedicating and remembering God’s faithfulness towards them.

In the same way, through our baptism, we must never forget God’s covenant towards us, as we bear witness to Christ’s presence in our everyday life and through the choices and decisions that we make. As Jesus said, *“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*[[5]](#footnote-5)**Choose God and remain steadfast in God’s faithfulness**.

 No longer shall we drink milk like infants do but we must go on to maturity and chew on solid food. In order for us to grow in faith and onto maturity, we must leave our elementary and childish ways behind, and ground ourselves in the truth. The training wheels are off and there’s no turning back, but God promised that he would continue to equip us and sustain us in running this race.

 **Another sign of maturity and growth in faith is our obedience that involves not only our minds but also our hearts.** We cannot say we are righteous and obedient to God if we continue to hold grudges and quarrel over one another, especially to another brother or sister in Christ. We cannot further God’s ministry together if members are not on the same page and share a common vision together.

As one theologian summed up our Christian unity as follows: “***God desires for the community to be blessed. God desires life, not death. God hopes that we will make the right choice, for faithfulness. The right choice means blessings for the entire community, not just for some.****”[[6]](#footnote-6)*

 **As God’s servants, God’s field and God’s building, there can only be one sure foundation in Christ,** called to engage in Christ’s ministry of reconciliation and love. Christ is our common denominator of what unites us, in spite of our varying differences, perspectives and opinions that often divide and alienate us from the love of God.

 In a moment, we will be responding in song with one of the classic hymns #321 *“The Church’s One Foundation”*. This hymn was written back in 1866 by Samuel John Stone, who was a priest in the Church of England. The intention of the hymn was to strengthen the unity and the bond of the church through Christ in the midst of schism and divisions, as we strive to make space for healing, listening, and reconciling amongst us. We pray and acknowledge that Christ is still the sovereign head of the church and the foundation of our faith. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Ecclesiates 3:1-3* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *I Corinthians 3:9* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *I Corinthians 3:11* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Ephesians 4:14-15* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *John 15:7* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Andrew Foster Connors, *Feasting on the Word, Year A, Volume 1,* p.342 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)