

Juniors, the theme you chose for today's mass is unity. There are two words I need to say to you right away. I'm sorry. I'm sorry that the world has not given you a better example of unity.

Let me start with the church. You heard it in this gospel. Jesus' dying wish was that his disciples would be one. Basically, Christians do believe as one. But after Jesus died we became divided. When we pray together we cannot share eucharist together. Other groups of Christians have performed violence against one another even in our own day. As a church, we believe in unity. We celebrate it in our prayer. We venerate it by our service. But everybody knows, in the big picture we have failed. We as Christians have not given a better example of unity. I'm sorry.

Then look at our country. We say we are one nation under God, indivisible, but, everybody knows, we don't live up to that ideal. Last year's presidential election split us into two camps. Racism haunts our schools, businesses, and social lives. Economic injustice abounds. The gap between rich and poor is widening. Many people say their dream in life is to earn a lot of money very quickly and retire early. Very few say their dream in life is to eliminate poverty through the distribution of wealth, not the accumulation of wealth. As a country, we have not given a better example of unity. I'm sorry.

Then think about families. Couples unite themselves in marriage to raise children as one united household. Yet, everybody knows, many marriages fail. Some parents have made a very painful decision to divorce a household they thought would be together forever. Nobody likes going through a divorce, even when it is the best decision a person can make. But as families, we have not given a better example of unity for you. I'm sorry.

Then there are schools. School unity creates great pride. Yet, everybody knows, there are teachers who don't get along, and parents who don't get along with teachers. There are students who vandalize their own schools. There are students who commit violent crimes against their brothers and sisters in their very own classroom. We have not given a better example of unity for you. I'm sorry.

Don't get me wrong. When you say, "Our theme today is unity," I think it's great. But I don't want you to be naive. Unity isn't easy. You probably know this: You say you have class unity, but there are some classmates you would never go out with, never eat lunch with, never even talk to because for whatever reason you don't feel as united with them as you do with your closest friends. (I'm not blaming you. Our society has taught you this.) But to be united means working with people even when you'd rather not bother, no matter their race, color, creed, possessions, sexual orientation, appearance, sense of fashion, athletic ability, social skills, no matter how God's grace fills their lives and their sin turns it aside. Unity is cool, but it is hard. It is hard work. It is counter-cultural. To be united, we must remember the most difficult thing Jesus ever said: "Love your *enemies*." *Love your enemies*.

So celebrate this day well. It's a big day for your class. But shoulder this challenge with a clear eye and do it better than our society has done so far. Be one in every sense of the word. Be one.