

Saint John Chrysostom (c. 345-407), Bishop of Antioch then of Constantinople,
Doctor of the Church
Homilies on the First Letter to the Corinthians, no.24

"Go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift"

«We, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf,» (1Cor 10,17). What loaf is this? The Body of Christ. And what becomes of those who take it? The Body of Christ. They are no longer many bodies but one. How many wheat grains there are in the composition of a loaf! Yet who sees those grains? They are certainly contained in the loaf they have made but they are so bound together that nothing distinguishes one from the other.

We are united in the same way with one another and with Christ. We are no longer many bodies fed by different foods; we form one single body, nourished and given life by one and the same bread. Hence Paul says: «We all partake of the one loaf.» If we all share the one loaf, and if we are all united in him so as to become one body, why are we not united by the same love, closely bound together by the same charity?

Re-read the story of our ancestors in the faith and you will come across this remarkable picture: «The community of believers was of one heart and mind,» (Acts 4,32). Alas, however, it is no longer like that today. In our day the Church is offering a completely opposite spectacle: we see nothing but unhappy conflicts and bitter strife between the brothers... You were far away from him yet Christ did not hesitate to unite you to himself and do you now disdain to imitate him so as to unite yourselves wholeheartedly to your brother?... Because of sin, our bodies, formed from clay (Gen 2,7), were separated from their life and had become slaves of death; the Son of God has added the leaven of his own flesh to them, flesh free from sin, in fullness of life. And he has given his body as food to all mankind so that, renewed by this sacrament of the altar, they should all have a share in his immortal and blessed life.