

Every Part Does Its Share (1)

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Men have a strong tendency to create order by evaluating, prioritizing and arranging themselves according to perceived value. Companies are structured so that the most valuable members – executives – are at the top of the hierarchy. They fly in the corporate jets, make huge salaries and are lavished with many other perks commensurate with their position. So it is with the military, sports teams and many other human organizations.

While such arrangements can be beneficial, they can also breed divisive competitiveness. The upper echelons are consumed with pride while their underlings stew in envy. Thus, it is not uncommon to hear of corporate misconduct, bickering and infighting on the team and, perhaps to a lesser extent, insubordination among the troops.

Many manmade religious organizations copy this hierarchical blueprint. They have world, national, regional, state and local authorities; the leadership is distinguished from the “laity” by elaborate rituals, uniforms and executive privilege. It is no wonder that the same sorts of political maneuvering and scandalous intrigue that are characteristic of the world plague these churches.

As Jesus said to the disciples, *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you ...”* (Mt 20:25-26).

Jesus does not forbid acknowledging and even praising the good works of others. When Mary was criticized for anointing Jesus with expensive oil, Jesus noted: *“Assuredly, I say to You, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her”* (Mt 26:13).

What Jesus does forbid is conferring status and power upon some, thus creating the illusion that certain ones in the kingdom are more important than others. While some may possess qualities that place them in the public eye more than others, Jesus makes it absolutely clear that everyone’s abilities are gifts of God and are to be used as stewards by those who possess them.

The truth is that: 1) *“The body is not one member but many”* (1 Cor 12:14). For the physical body to function at peak capacity, all of its parts must contribute. 2) *“Those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary”* (1 Cor 12:22). “Seem to be weaker” suggests arbitrary value that men place upon things. Elbows are not beauty accessories, but it would be awfully hard to get a cup of coffee to your lips without them.

Way too much emphasis has been placed upon preachers in our day. Such has stunted church growth, fostered division and led many a pampered preacher astray. No minority group will make the church all the Lord wants it to be. His plan: *“every part does its share (and) causes growth of the body ...”* (Eph 4:16).