

# Editorial: To become more than a buzzword, unity must be rooted in truth

What is true unity?

It's a question we've been thinking a lot about at Our Sunday Visitor, where we have in recent years summarized our longtime mission as "speaking the truth in charity, in a way that unites."

Unity means togetherness, oneness and harmony. It implies a sense of shared purpose and goals. We think of a "united front," a "unified mission" or the union of husband and wife.

But for all of its positive connotations, unity has become a buzzword of late. In this time of deep division and polarization – both within our country and within the Church – most of us claim to desire unity, but we aren't really sure what that means.

The unity of Americans was a main theme of President Joe Biden's inaugural address on Jan. 20. "Today, on this January day, my whole soul is in this: Bringing America together. Uniting our people. And uniting our nation," he said. "I ask every American to join me in this cause. Uniting to fight the common foes we face: Anger, resentment, hatred. Extremism, lawlessness, violence. Disease, joblessness, hopelessness. With unity we can do great things."

It's a positive message full of language that resonates for people of goodwill. At a moment when divisiveness abounds, the idea of coming together for the common good is both highly attractive and what we are called to do as Christians.

And yet, we would be doing a disservice to our mission and to

the Faith we profess if we did not state plainly that unity cannot exist without a shared objective truth – the truth found in Jesus Christ. While Catholics can and should discern points of agreement with political policies that seek the common good, this is not the same as being united with those policies or with the party that proposes them. Unity is not synonymous with compromise. Nor is it “going along to get along.” It does not turn a blind eye or shrug a shoulder. Real unity means a common understanding of, and adherence to, not “a” truth or “my” truth or “your” truth – but *the* truth.

During the recent celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Christians reflected on Christ’s own prayer to God the Father – “that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me” (Jn 17:21).

“That the world may believe that you sent me.” Imagine for a moment if the world were genuinely united in the belief that, out of pure love, God the Father sent his only son to die for us so that we might one day join him for eternity. Were that the case, unity would no longer be a dream; it would be universally and unequivocally celebrated.

But we find ourselves instead on dangerous footing. Not only is the number of Christians rapidly declining in this country, the number of “religiously unaffiliated” is on the rise. And this abandonment of Christ has led to a freefall from objective truth – to the point where we can no longer agree even that humans are either biologically male or female. Indeed, it is becoming increasingly more dangerous simply to write those words, lest we be accused of hate speech.

Just look at Catholic World Report, an online magazine published by Ignatius Press, which had its Twitter account suspended recently when it tweeted that Dr. Rachel Levine, President Biden’s nominee as Assistant Secretary for Health of the Department of Health and Human Services, was “a biological

man identifying as a transgender woman.” What Twitter identified as “hateful conduct” was simply a statement of truth. No [executive order](#) issued by the Biden administration can make it otherwise.

When we can no longer agree on objective truth – even on the scientific fact that human beings are either male or female from the moment of conception – then true unity, no matter how much we claim to desire it, becomes an impossibility.

That’s not to say that we can’t still pray and work for unity. We can, and we should. But we need to be clear that the only unity that is real is that which is rooted in the truth of Jesus Christ. Anything else is just a buzzword.

*Our Sunday Visitor Editorial Board: Gretchen R. Crowe, Scott P. Richert, Scott Warden, York Young*