

The GOOD STEWARD

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For the Members of St. Jude Catholic Church

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Equity, Justice, Mercy

by Fr. Tim Church

When we look back at the description of the first Christian communities, we are probably surprised. There are characteristics of those churches that we may not have seen before.

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

Now, we can quickly identify a problem with this passage, in terms of our modern democratic and capitalistic system of life. The communal style of living might shock us. Is this merely an idle description of a rare moment in the Church's life or is there a principal that is intended to be a guide of how we should live? Certainly the tiny size of the first communities allowed a certain kind of freedom to act in this way. Those of us who have lived in small rural parishes know that the financial concerns of our neighbors inspired sacrifices.

There is another element of the early church that might help sort out their communal life. A look at other similar descriptions of this community might help.

Now in regard to the collection for the holy ones, you also should do as I ordered the churches of Galatia.

*On the first day of the week each of you should set aside and save whatever one can afford ... (1Corinthians 16:1-2)
 (You can read more about this in 2Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9.)*

Now, however, I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the holy ones. For Macedonia and Achaia have decided to make some contribution for the poor among the holy ones in Jerusalem; they decided to do it, and in fact they are indebted to them, for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to serve them in material blessings. (Romans 15:25-27)

We should not see this as merely a means for supplying operating capital for missionary churches. It was a share, across geographical lines, of the bonds that had been formed among them. It is a bond of friendship that is the gift of the Spirit. Among his gifts are "unity, peace, joy and the praise of God our Father." As we make decisions regarding our gifts to the Church, we certainly must know that it is within this spirit of friendship that our gifts are given. The electric bill might not appear a worthy object of friendship but the reality is that even the lights and the air conditioning are in service of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Whatever facilitates the community of faith is a worthy object of our support. Here is the fundamental difference between the Christian community and the community built on the foundation of human wisdom. Ours is a community of friendship in the Lord.

Honduras Update

The political unrest in Honduras is the main topic of concern these days. Even though there have been no significant reports of violence, there are some crudely organized protests. From the reports we sporadically receive, road blocks and marches are the extent of the unrest. Referring to the State Department's issuance of a "travel alert" the Bishop has curtailed any official travel from our Diocese.* Currently, the travel alert expires in October but may be reissued or extended. Presidential elections will be held November 29th and hopefully, the outcome will be generally accepted. If this brings peace, we may resume travel sometime after the first of next year.

We continue to seek ways to assist our brothers and sisters in our companion parishes and to help Bishop Sole' in his work in the Diocese of Trujillo. At the invitation of Bishop Sole' we have given the first CRHP weekend in Honduras. Now, the men of CRHP #1 at St. Rita's in Saba are continuing their formation. They sometimes have to walk considerable distances every week to participate. Road blocks by political protesters sometimes prevent travel.

To assist our brothers and sisters in their mission to spread the Word and live according to the model of the saints, we have sent \$30,000 in financial aid. This was divided equally between St. Stephen's in Rio Esteban, St. Rita's in Saba and the Diocese of Trujillo's general fund.

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