

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - [C]
September 18 and 19, 2010

(Inauguration of St. Kate's Bridge Campaign)

Amos 8:4-7; Psalm 113; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; Luke 16: 1-13.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, who lived between 1491 and 1556 in a tumultuous age of reform not unlike our own, founder of the Society of Jesus, popularly known today as the Jesuit Order, gave many gifts to the church born of his faith, commitment to the Gospel and profound spirituality. Among these gifts is what is known today as: *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. There is a 30-day silent retreat that is based on the Spiritual Exercises and it begins with prayer focused on what St. Ignatius calls: "The First Principle and Foundation" of the Christian life; it is this:

The human person is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his/her soul.

The other things on the face of the earth are created for the human person to help (him) in attaining the end for which he/she is created.

Hence, the human person is to make use of the other things on the face of the earth insofar as they help in the attainment of his/her end, and he must rid himself of them in so far as they prove a hindrance.

Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things.

Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to [praising, reverencing and serving God our Lord, and by this means saving our] soul.

In other words, God is the origin of everything and flowing from that origin all things have been created for you and for me to make our way to God.

Ignatius' "First Principle and Foundation" is precisely the point of today's readings. In the Gospel, the rich man's steward is dishonest but he is given credit for prudence. Frantic because he is about to be fired, the steward in affect gives up his rightful commission coming to him from his master's debtors owed and does this in order to build relationships with them, albeit selfish in intent. So he will not be left out in the cold. The rich man however commends him for his savvy. In telling this parable Jesus also commends him:

"I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings."

Jesus is clear: the purpose of material reality is to build lasting, eternal reality. The purpose of the things of this world is to bring together the people of this world so we can, together, make our way to God. Accumulating money and property is not a goal in itself. Money and property are merely incidental tools God places at our disposal so we can build relationships that move us toward our salvation.

In Jesus' mind, then, we are, all of us, simply stewards of creation. All that we have, all that we are is really God's, not ours alone. We are entrusted with it, yes, certainly, to the benefit of our families and our own personal needs but we are also entrusted with it for the sake of the common good and for building up our relationships with God and each other so we can bring about God's kingdom.

It is that sense of stewardship of our human resources that I wish to appeal to today on behalf of the common good of this community of faith, the Catholic Church of St. Katharine Drexel.

We have a profound and powerful mission:

United by God's Word, Eucharist, and prayer, the Roman Catholic Community of Saint Katharine Drexel is called to see Christ in all and to be Christ to all.

This mission is the foundation of our vision, the vision which guides our life, our actions and our decisions as a parish. Though never before completely articulated I believe that vision to be this: *“That as Catholic Christians living in the 21st Century we seek to bring Christ's light and love to all our relationships with others and by living our values which are: community, creativity, faith, integrity and service we influence others to know and love Christ.”* Think about that – hear it again (repeat).

Today, as I stand before you as your Pastor I am not here to simply beg you to help us out because we have come upon hard economic times. First, because there is really no “you and us” this is all about “we” together. And, second and most importantly I believe that we have a mission and vision that is both amazing and exciting.

We have the tremendous opportunity and privilege to be the “leaven of Christ” in our world. As yeast is the leaven that makes bread rise, so we are the leaven that makes Christ presence rise today in our world. I was reminded of this again when I read these words in an article the other day: *“The Church is at the service of [God]. She serves not herself, not to become strong; rather, she serves to make the announcement of Jesus Christ more accessible: the great truths, the great powers of love and reconciliation which appeared in Him and which always come from the presence of Jesus Christ.”*

Practically that means that our gathering to celebrate Eucharist; our coming together for Generations of Faith; our providing together for the formation of our children and youth in preparation for the sacraments; our providing for the Catholic identity and fellowship of our youth through youth activities, vacation Bible School, Mission trips; our involvement in actions and service to others based on the Social Justice teachings of the Church; the formation of various groups in the parish – be they Kate’s Quilters, Knights of Columbus, Faith/Bible Study groups or Prayer Groups – all of these and the more we maybe invited to establish as we grow, are both the very foundation stones as well as the living out of what it means to be “the leaven of Christ”. These and everything that takes place here or because of your belonging here is what puts flesh and blood on our mission and vision.

So I sincerely invite each and everyone in the parish to invest yourself through the resources that God has given you – your energy, your prayers, and yes, your money – in this work to which God has called us.

Bottom line, we need to work together to raise \$600,000 over the next three years. So I am announcing this weekend the inauguration of “The St. Kate’s Bridge Campaign”. It is the financial bridge we need in order to more firmly establish our sustainability, our economic viability, to lay the ground work necessary before we can take on a future building project and in order to support and uphold our mission and vision.

This coming week every household in the parish will receive a special letter from me about this endeavor.

Included with the letter will be a one page summary of exactly what the monies raised will fund, and there will be a pledge card included as well. Please read these materials, give prayerful consideration to all this and pledge to the extent that you can over the next three years. Obviously, I am asking for your gracious and sacrificial generosity over and above your regular Sunday offering.

Also a number of people may be invited by Campaign Committee members and me to some evening gatherings next weekend to discuss the campaign – should you receive an invite please come!

Together we can and will make this a success! Our common involvement in this necessary campaign will only prove the truth of the Apostle Paul's words to the Church community at Corinth when he wrote them to declare: *"You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity..." (2 Cor. 9:11)*

Thank you in advance for that generosity and as I always end my writing to you from the words of St. Francis of Assisi: "Peace and All Good!"

[A compilation of the reflections and thoughts of the **Rev. Michael Papesh** from a homily for the 25th Sunday of the Year (C) entitled: **The First Principle and Foundation**; those of the **Rev. Henri J. M. Nouwen** in his treatise entitled: **The Spirituality of Fund-Raising**, Copyright © 2004 Estate of Henri J. M. Nouwen; and my own the **Rev. Paul A. Jaroszeski**, Pastor of St. Katharine Drexel Catholic Church, Ramsey, MN]