



St. Thomas the Apostle Newsletter
“Faith, Seeking Understanding”
June 5, 2020 (Ember Friday in Whitsuntide)

2 Corinthians 8:9-12 teaches us an important principle of the Christian life.

The context is St. Paul reminding the Corinthians about a commitment they made to collect money for their fellow Christians in Jerusalem, who were experiencing great persecution from Rome and fellow Jews, and were starving.

During St. Paul’s first visit, the Corinthians pledged to put together a collection which would be picked up and brought to Jerusalem at a later time. But from Philippi (where he wrote 2 Corinthians) he was hearing they were slow in following through with their commitment, and that some had not contributed at all!

This is the Apostle’s instructions to them: “And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do...¹¹ but now you also must complete the doing *of it*; that as *there was* a readiness to desire *it*, so *there also may be* a completion out of what *you have*.¹² For if there is first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to what one has, *and* not according to what he does not have.” (NKJV)

While St. Paul was specifically addressing the Corinthians responsibility to fulfill the financial pledge they had made, the principle he lays down goes beyond it.

When we are confirmed or received into the Church, we make a commitment to it. We pledge our belief in her doctrines. We pledge our commitment to her discipline, worship and faith practices. We pledge our service. We pledge ourselves.

The world today makes light of such things. But then the world thinks everything exists for its own convenience. Sadly, some Christians have bought into this thinking too. They think the Church is here to serve them. They go to *get for* themselves and not to *give of* themselves. They reject the truth that “It is in giving that we receive...” (Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi).

And even those who have not surrendered to such thinking often do not faithfully follow through on the pledge they have made. Mass attendance and parish involvement is a “part-time gig” for some; something to do when nothing else is going on.

St. Paul’s principle exhorts us...“What about your pledge? What about the vows you took when you were confirmed or received? What did they mean to you? If they meant something, then follow through on them!”

St. Paul prefaces his principle with the example of our Lord Jesus Christ (8:9). For the Corinthians, He was their example in their contribution commitment. For us, He is our example in our Confirmation and reception commitments.

Jesus came to serve all people and His Church in particular. This is the example we are to follow as we fulfill our commitments to the Church (St. Matthew 20:25-28).

Parishes are the local “branches” of the Church, which is the Body of Christ. It is the place Jesus has designated for us to present ourselves as living sacrifices to be used for His glory. It is the place designated for us to serve His people. We have vowed a commitment to that Body. Like the Corinthians, we need to follow through.

Fr. Paul

Earlier this week, Fr. Paul spoke with Bishop Chad about further restoring components of our worship services. Beginning this Sunday, we are permitted to sing hymns and portions of the liturgy (i.e. *Kyrie, Sanctus and Agnus Dei*). We are also permitted to receive the Eucharist in both forms (see below). Restoration of parish activities will be discussed at the end of June.

Those who wish to receive the Eucharist in both forms will receive *by intinction only*. We will still have only four communicants at the rail at a time. The celebrant will take the host from each communicant, dip it into the chalice and administer it on the tongue. In between receptions, the celebrant will wipe his fingers with a purificator wet with isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol. If you do not desire to receive the Eucharist in both forms, remain at the rail while others receive and cross your arms across your chest to show the priest you are abstaining.

Sunday is the final day for the 2020 Diocesan Lenten appeal. If you have yet to contribute and would like to do so, please bring or send a check to the church this weekend. Thank you.

There will be a mass on the Prayer Book Feast of St. Barnabas this Thursday, June 11 at 6:30 p.m. The propers for the feast are on pg. 240.

A parish questionnaire was attached to the e-mail with last week's newsletter and has been attached to this week's also. Please complete it and return it to Fr. Paul or to the church in c/o Fr. Paul by this Wednesday. The Vestry would like to know your preferences.

Wisdom from the Church Fathers:

“Thus a true sacrifice is every work which is done that we may be united to God in holy fellowship, and which has a reference to that supreme good and end in which alone we can be truly blessed. And therefore even the mercy we show to men, if it is not shown for God's sake, is not a sacrifice. For, though made or offered by man, sacrifice is a divine thing, as those who called it *sacrifice* meant to indicate. Thus man himself, consecrated in the name of God, and vowed to God, is a sacrifice in so far as he dies to the world that he may live to God. For this is a part of that mercy which each man shows to himself; as it is written, ‘Have mercy on your soul by pleasing God.’ (Sirach 30:24)

Our body, too, is a sacrifice when we chasten it by temperance, if we do so as we ought, for God's sake, that we may not yield our members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but instruments of righteousness unto God (Romans 6:13). Exhorting to this sacrifice, the apostle says, ‘I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.’ (Romans 12:1)

If, then, the body, which, being inferior, the soul uses as a servant or instrument, is a sacrifice when it is used rightly, and with reference to God, how much more does the soul itself become a sacrifice when it offers itself to God, in order that, being inflamed by the fire of His love, it may receive of His beauty and become pleasing to Him, losing the shape of earthly desire, and being remoulded in the image of permanent loveliness?”

-St. Augustine of Hippo (5th century) Bishop and Doctor of the Church. City of God, Book 10, Chapter 6.

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