



St. Thomas the Apostle Newsletter
“Faith, Seeking Understanding”
June 26, 2020 (SS. John and Paul, 4th century Martyrs)

There is a beautiful line in the “Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi” that says “It is in giving that we receive...” This is the essence of the Christian life; a life that first gives, in the hope of receiving.

Many Christians today think differently, the opposite even. They’ve adopted the consumer mentality of the world. They go to church in order to receive; in order to “get.”

A church is to provide them a service like a restaurant or a primary care doctor. If they can’t “Have it your way...” (as a fast food commercial once said) or its pastoral manners, it’s out the door and on to another church that will give them what they expect. Such thinking is wrong!

In St. Luke 6:38 Jesus says “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” The “Prosperity Preachers” say this mean if we send them \$100, God will give us \$1,000 (or more) back.

When we read the whole of this chapter (currently in Morning Prayer) we see this twists that verse out of context. That chapter is Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain teachings (which echo the Sermon on the Mount). In the verses preceding, Jesus teaches us to love our enemies, to be merciful and to use caution in passing judgment. In context then, verse 38 is Jesus teaching us to give of ourselves! It is in giving of ourselves to others that others will give of themselves to us in return and God will bless us eternally (St. Matthew 25:40).

The Prayer Book teaches us this same thing. In the General Thanksgiving in Morning and Evening Prayer we pray, “And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by *giving up our selves to thy service*, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord...”

This is what Jesus is teaching us in St. Luke 6:38. We give praise to God by giving ourselves to Christ in service. And service to Christ is service to His Church, to the people of His Church and to all whom He sends us to serve (for He is the Head of the Body, Colossians 1:18).

A parish, as the local Body of Christ, has one purpose: to give itself in service to Christ.

When we gather together for the Sunday Eucharist, we give of ourselves in service to Christ. The same is true on weekdays and Holy Days. When we study God’s Word together, we give ourselves in service to Christ. When we fellowship together after mass, we give ourselves in service to Christ. When we do service work at the parish or with our parish in our community, we give ourselves in service to Christ. As we give of ourselves in any of these ways, we give ourselves in service to Christ.

Our parish’s sole purpose should be to build ways for us to give service to Christ.

The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi is beautiful. As we read it, and especially as we pray it each day, we will see the flow of its petitions and lines lead to a very specific end.

The final three lines say “For it is in giving that we receive, It is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and It is in dying that we are born again to eternal life. Amen.”

Fr. Paul

Fr. Paul will be back from visiting his family tomorrow.

There will be mass for the Prayer Book Feast of St. Peter on Monday, June 29 at 6:00 p.m.
(Please note the time change)

The weekday, Wednesday Noon mass will resume on July 1.

Yesterday in Morning Prayer we began to read St. Luke chapter 6. Today (Friday) we will read about Jesus taking time alone in prayer and then afterwards choosing the twelve Apostles from among His disciples. St. Luke then states Jesus came down from the mountain to preach to the people “in the plain” (St. Luke 6:17). The teaching given through the end of the chapter is the same (though more concise) teaching Jesus gives in St. Matthew chapters 5-7 (the Sermon on the Mount). In both sermons, Jesus teaches how we are to be living now, today, in His Kingdom. We are not waiting for the Kingdom of God to begin! It is, as Jesus says in St. Luke 17:20, 21, “...within you.” The Fathers, and in particular Tertullian, taught this means the Kingdom is “within your hand” or “within your power.” Whichever way it is best to understand Jesus’ words; His point certainly is His Kingdom has come to us. Not yet in its fullness, but we are not waiting for it to begin. Therefore, what Jesus teaches in St. Luke 6 is instruction for us today! He is teaching us how our Father in heaven expects us to live today. As we read this chapter through this weekend into Monday, let us ask ourselves “Am I doing so...?”

The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy;
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in
dying that we are born to eternal life.

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