

## 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C (Together in Mission Commitment Weekend)

A catechist was teaching her young students how to pray. As an exercise, she had each write a letter to God. Walking through the classroom while they were writing, she happened to glance down at one girl's note. It read, "Dear God, Thank you for the new baby brother. But what I asked for was a puppy."

We have perhaps all been like that girl or a boy who wanted a toy for his birthday but got clothes instead. And yet, we might have needed the one and not the other. Sometimes we do not know how to receive a gift.

Sometimes we do not know how to give one either. This last week was St. Valentine's Day, and you might have given a present to that special someone in your life on the 14th. But what was your motive? What intention did you have in your mind? What were you thinking about when you gave it?

Was the idea something like the following: "I am going to get my wife flowers because I have to"? "I am going to send this guy a card because I want us to start dating,"? Or "I'm going to take my spouse to a nice restaurant, so that way they will love me"? If the idea is any version of 'I am giving X to get Y,' it is transactional, a quid pro quo, no different than when you walk into a store and buy a piece of fruit; the only difference is the currency involved.

The world indeed operates along with this principle: I will do something for you if you do something for me. More than just an exchange of services, there is a real economy of favors, expressed in that saying, "I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine." While that may be how the world works, it is not how God works.

God did not pay the price of our redemption and then sent us the bill. He did not charge sinners for costing him his life while on earth. In fact, he doesn't charge for anything. Instead, God offers to others—even the "grateful and wicked"—what is His by right; in other words, he "lends expecting nothing back" (cf. Luke 6:35).

And Christ invites us in his Gospel to something similar, and this very day we have the chance to realize it. In short, there are communities in our archdiocese that are asking for help. These are the schools where education is most needed and least affordable. These parishes have the people but do not have the power to make it on their own. The collection, the program, and commitment are undertaken today are to help these

places in our local church; it is called "Together In Mission," and it is an opportunity—for all of us.

For the Gospel comes not just with an invitation, but a promise: "Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you" (Luke 6:38). The principle expressed here is one that cannot be demonstrated by deductive reasoning; it cannot be proven ahead of time; it can only be experienced. And it requires faith, faith to do it, faith to truly live by it, faith to put it into practice, and see our Lord deliver on his promise.

Indeed, our God promises to repay and overpay for what we give. God is making a deal, guaranteeing a return, obliging Himself to pay us based on what we give to others in need. Only God can make God do anything, and He has chosen s to do so here.

As St. Augustine put it, "God has put himself in our debt—not because we have given him anything but because he has promised us so much" (Exposition of Psalm 109, n. 1). Do we truly believe that we will collect? Do we believe that one day we will receive that which He has promised? Do we believe that when we give, 'the measure with which we measure will be measured out to us?'