

Gifts for Others

January 18, 1998 - Second Sunday, Ordinary Time, Cycle C

Readings: Isaiah 62:1-5 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 John 2:1-12

Today we see my kind of Jesus. The first miracle He performed was changing water into wine at a party, and you do realize that weddings went on for three days in his time. So that's why they saved the good wine and put the bad wine last because people, after three days of drinking, couldn't tell what they were drinking anyway. And so here we go: Jesus who was very human, Jesus who was very involved and concerned with everyday things. You know, sometimes, we like to make this Jesus, this other worldly, extra-ordinary, super holy guy. He was super holy. But He was one who was like us in all things but sin. Even the way He talked to His mother. "Woman, what concern does this of yours have to do with me?" Poor Mary! We get in touch with Jesus though. It wasn't His time. His hour had not yet come. But Mary says "Do whatever He tells you." And He says, "Ohhh , ok." And then He became more concerned with doing something for another. What an example He gives us in the very beginning of His ministry! A man for others! A man who could change His mind for the love of somebody else! And that's what He does.

This is an aside -- I'm not going to preach on this. But the very last words recorded by Mary in the Scriptures are here. "Do whatever He tells you." They are the last recorded words that Mary spoke in the Bible. And it's interesting that that's how the Scriptures would end with our dealing with Mary and what she said. "Do whatever He tells you." And it's interesting that all the apparitions and that come to the same thing. "Do whatever Jesus tells you."

All that aside I want to spend time today in the second reading, 1 Corinthians 12: 4 and following. "There are different gifts but the same Spirit. There are different ministries but the same Lord. There are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone." We want to focus on verse 7. If you have your Bibles, underline it because it's important. And this especially for a charismatic parish. "So to each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." That is what everything is given (for). There isn't "MY gifts of the Holy Spirit." They are OUR gifts of the Holy Spirit that are given to us for the common good of the whole body. For everything I do I have to be asking myself "Is this for the good of the whole body, the Church, the Church here and us" or "Is this what I like to do?" or "Is this what is good for everybody?" Now get this, this is what the Word of God says about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that they are given for the common good. It's kind of like the gift of priesthood. The gift of my priesthood isn't for Father Larry. I've talked about this before. I cannot baptize myself, I cannot hear my confession. I wish I could sometimes and look in the mirror and say "I absolve you of all your sins." I can't do that. I can't anoint myself. I can't confirm myself, I can't ordain myself. The gift that God has given me is not mine at all but 100% for you. Even if I say a Mass privately, it has to be a Mass for the whole body. It has to be a Mass knowing the whole body is present there in the Church. In the God who is the one body of the triumphant, suffering and the Church militant. So everybody is there and it's a

community. And so the gift I have been given I can't use for myself. Think of that. It's for you and if that's true for priesthood, so it's true with tongues and prophecy and ministry and healing. Everything that has been given to you isn't given for you. I want to use my gift for my thing. No! It is given for us. And so that is true of everything that you and I do. It's given for the common good. Am I using this for the good of the whole community?

Let's look at more examples of this. Go to Acts 2:44. We talked about this a couple weeks ago -- about the communal life. In V.42 "They devoted themselves to the apostles' instruction, the communal life and the breaking of the bread." V. 43 "A reverent fear overtook them all. For many wonders and signs were being performed by the apostles." Very good. Ours is v. 44 "Those who believed shared all things in common. They would sell their property and goods, dividing everything on the basis of each one's need. They went to the temple area every day. Every day, while in their homes they broke bread. With exalted and sincere hearts they took their meals in common, praising God and winning the approval of the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number." If we're going to use and if we're going to grow as a community of Jesus Christ, we use the gifts for the common good. We build up the body and I use everything I've got for the love of you. And everything you've got, you give for love of me and for love of the person next to you, to build up the body of Christ.

Another passage: Acts 4:32. And if we get this I will be praising God for all eternity. You ready? "The community of believers were of one heart and one mind." Praise God! "The community of believers were of one heart and one mind." That we do everything as a body, that we do everything first of all, for us, in accordance with our Holy Father. That we always acknowledge and support what our Holy Father teaches. You know nowadays it's kind of cool that if the Holy Father says one thing, we say "Well that's just stupid." I hear it all the time. Not from our community, praise God. But the reality is that we've got to be one heart and one mind with our Holy Father, one heart and one mind with our bishop, we've got to be one heart and one mind with one another. Because again we are called for the common good. Again in John 14: "Lord, may they be one." The Lord calls us to a unity of heart and mind, the unity that expresses itself in our community. And then to confirm all that let's go to -- and this is the last passage for today -- Philippians, chapter 2 which I love and I've used a thousand times and I thought it fit in so well. It says "Never act out of rivalry or conceit. Rather let all parties think humbly of others as superior to themselves. Each of you looking to others interests rather than your own."

Jesus has given us so much as a community. He loves us so much as the first reading tells us, has given all that we have that we can put it at the service of one another. You and I have to be looking and thinking: Do I do what I do for the service of another? Do I use the gifts that God has given me totally for others? And that's not just the spiritual gifts. All the money you have has been given to you for others. Do you know that? "They held everything in common." All the gifts you have, not just the spiritual gifts, if you can talk, if you can draw, if you're a guitar player, whatever it is, has been given to you for the body of Christ. Everything that you have has been given to you, everything that I have has been given for others. Now it doesn't mean that we can't keep what we have. We use

it and then use it for others. It's kind of like this: I give you a million dollars. And I say this money is yours. You can do with it as you will. But make sure that when I give you this million dollars that you also take care of those people over there who are starving. And you say to me "Is this mine?" "Yes, it's yours." "Is it a gift?" "Yes, it's yours." And you pocket it and you spend it all on yourself. People do that constantly. And yet it was given to you for others. In my life I have to often think about that. My money, do I take the money that I get, which isn't much, and do I spend it on others? Do I give it away? The talents that I have, little that they are, do I take them and use them all for others or do I just think about my wants and my needs and my desires? Everything that has been given to me and to you has been given to us for others. So what are you doing with the gifts you have? Are you using them? For others? And I would say most of you are. Most of you are. But some of us aren't. So let's think about how I live and my concern about my needs, my wants, my family or am I more concerned about the community at large. Just a challenge. I am concerned about me a lot too. Don't take this as just you, it's me too. It's all of us.