

5th Sunday Ordinary Time • B
February 6-7, 2009 • Christ the King

Many years ago, three men were mixing water, sand, lime and other ingredients in a trough. Someone asked them what they were doing. The first said, "I am making mortar." The second: "I am laying bricks." But the third said, "I am building a cathedral." They each were doing the same thing, but their perspective was different and that made all the difference.

We can see something similar in the way people relate to their parish when they give. One person says, "Oh, All they ever do is ask for money." The second person replies, "Well, you do have bills to pay." The third person says, "I am building the Body of Christ." Again, all three are doing the same thing, but the perspective makes all the difference.

We can see these perspectives reflected in today's Scripture readings. Poor Job says that life is nothing but drudgery: when I lie down at night, I toss and turn, wondering when morning will come. But when I get up, I am tired and I wonder how long until I can get back to bed!

We can all probably readily relate to Job. But St. Paul takes a different perspective. Few people worked as hard as Paul, fewer still go through as many trials. Yet hear what he says about work: "I do so willingly... I have been entrusted with stewardship."

In today's Gospel, we have a fascinating example of stewardship in St. Peter's mother-in-law. She is sick, and in bed when her Peter brings home unexpected guests. Jesus goes to her bedside, takes her hand and heals her. What does she do, she jumps up and waits on them!

Now, I don't know about you, but if I have been sick. The last thing in the world that I want to do when I feel better is to jump up and wait on anyone. I prefer to stay in bed for a while. I afraid of what that says about me compared to this wonderful woman of stewardship.

We have talked about stewardship on and off for a while. But what is it? Does it work when times are difficult?

Stewardship is a way of life, in good times and bad. It is putting our baptism into action. Stewardship is about perspective. Stewardship invites us to see that all that we have, even all that we are, is a gift from God. Stewardship invites us to nurture these gifts responsibly and to share them justly and charitably. Stewardship invites us to return our gifts to God abundantly. The perspective of stewardship is gratitude.

Let's go back to Peter's mother-in-law. The text says, "she waited on them." The word used is service. Jesus touched her, healed her and she responded in service. She jumps out of bed and serves. She is grateful and responds by serving. Isn't that what discipleship is all about? Isn't that what our baptism calls us to?

Jesus touches us. Jesus heals us. Jesus blesses us with so many gifts, talents and resources. Jesus invites us to serve on another.

St Paul was joyful in his service. He is free and yet he says, "I have made myself a slave to all." Freedom isn't a license to do whatever we want. For a Christian, we are freed so that we can serve.

We aren't making mortar. We are building a church. We don't give our time, talent and treasure grudgingly; we are building the Body of Christ. We are stewards; and that perspective makes all the difference!

Adapted from Entrusted with A Stewardship by Fr. Phil Bloom.
http://www.geocities.com/seapadre_1999/