

R.C.I.A.
2 Corinthians 8:12-15

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Our Sunday readings speak of equity, and equity is the beginning of Christian justice. St. Paul says, "your plenty at the present time should supply their needs, so that their surplus may in turn supply your needs." St. Paul was praising the generosity of the Macedonians in order to rouse the Corinthians to emulate them. The whole focus was the opportunity of contributing to the worldwide collection for the needs of the Jerusalem community. Macedonia and Corinth were wealthy communities while the widows and orphans of the Jerusalem community were poor of worldly goods but rich in prayer and the grace of God. Their generosity would be repaid by Jerusalem's spiritual abundance that they bestowed on the rest of the Church. The Macedonians gave without any ulterior motive; thus their moral integrity is made the more manifest without any prodding on Paul's part. They gave not only what was asked, but more; they also provided helpers. They showed their bond of love uniting them in faith and service to those in need sharing God's gifts and goodness to the fullest.

It is only JUST to share what God's goodness has bestowed into our lives. Our worldly goods are not by our hands but by God's goodness. We do not own God's goodness any more than we really own our worldly goods. We are entrusted to be good stewards, distributors of His goodness. In the old testament, Yahweh brought this lesson home forcefully to the Israelites on their journey through the desert. God did not allow anyone to have too much or too little; they gathered only enough manna for one day at a time. He did not allow a condition of gross inequity to exist. The end result was a united people, a united community, a people who could bear the common burden as well as share the common good.

Jesus also brought equity to the level of love of neighbor. A freely given generosity is a freely given act of love such as God gives;

for we are made to God's image. Expecting nothing in return, yet building up an eternal treasure by means of a fleeting worldly treasure.

Every day is filled with the opportunity to love. Yet we tend to step over it or do not see it because we focus inward. we live for today, mindless of our tomorrows. Today we are called to be the giver, forgetting that tomorrow we may be the needy and the debtor. How can someone who has needs today have a surplus tomorrow from which we may need to draw? Let us not confuse worldly treasure and eternal treasure. God hears the cry of the poor. Through their forbearances; their enduring; their suffering and tragedies; their trusting in God's mercies, they gain spiritual treasure beyond measure. Poor in this world's riches, they are the richest of the rich in God's kingdom. Our worldly generosity given freely may ease their physical pain. Their spiritual generosity freely given may ease the pain of our soul in the next world. How better can this be seen than in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. {Luke 16: 20} All the lost opportunities the rich man had in this world lead to his tragic end in the next life. Again this theme was addressed by Jesus when He pointed out to Peter the great generosity in the story of the widow's mite. [Luke 21:2] Equity can not be one-sided. All must share in the good and in the suffering. Christian justice demands it for this is only fair. Our condition of life could just as easily be as theirs, but for the grace of God.

Unless we understand this lesson we risk being misfits not worthy of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is filled with empathizers, not sympathizers. Sympathizers say, "poor you, if you are hungry you should get something to eat." Empathizers share even what little possessions they have because they know what the pain of hunger is like. Many times they understand because they have been there and can share the pain through their experience. How unfortunate we are if we have never shared a pain; maybe even cursed, for we cannot know how to really love. God's kingdom is all about how to really love, which is equity!

Equity and fairness lead to justice. Justice leads to forgiveness and forgiveness leads to peace. Peace is to experience the burning furnace of charity which is God, Himself - total equity.

