

Pastor's corner - February 6, 2011 - Work and Ministries

Each weekend when we come together to celebrate the Eucharist we do so at a public, communal event where we worship together as a community, together as family members, together as neighbours, together as members of the same community of faith. The whole Sunday liturgy is also designed in such a way that, re-energized with collective spiritual energy and nourished by the Word of God and by the Bread of Life, Christ Himself, we are sent back to the world to become, in the words of today's Gospel: "salt of the earth" and "light of the world (Matthew 5: 13-16)."

In fact, the English word "liturgy" comes from the Greek "leitourgia" which in ancient Greece was a fusion of two terms standing for "people" and "work" to designate public tasks performed by Greek citizens. So, in a way, liturgy can be translated "the work of the people in the public square" or simply "people's work." Our celebration does not just invite us, but rather compels us to engage the world, to humanize the places where we live and work: our family, our neighbourhood, our school, our work place, etc. When our liturgy doesn't do so then it is incomplete. We need to remember that our daily life and our daily work are part of the Eucharistic mystery; that the Eucharist we celebrate is one of the most important tools for our work, for our daily life. And so each liturgy is supposed to challenge all of us to make our daily life holy, to make our work holy, and to treat these as an extension to the Eucharist.

We may object and say that our work and our daily life are far from perfect! Yes, no doubt! That is why at the beginning of Mass we reflect on our failings and our need for God's mercy, and we remember that we have been redeemed by Christ, not just individually but also in our work and in our daily life. Forgiven for our failings in our marriage and family commitments, forgiven for falling short of our professional and community ideals and obligations, we take our best selves and bring them forward into the rest of the Mass and then into the week to come. The gifts that we offer of bread and wine are imperfect just as all of us who have come together are imperfect. But the bread and the wine poured out and that are consecrated, broken and shared come from the work of human hands and from ordinary human beings; they represent all of the food and the work, all of the lives of the world. They represent the lives and the work of the bankers and the cleaners, of the care workers and the doctors, of the farm workers and of the truck drivers, of the housewives and of the mothers, of the people who pick up the garbage and of the work of priests and politicians. It is all that and more that becomes Christ on the altar, Eucharist for the life of the world. Let us give thanks for all active and retired workers in our community and let us bless their work!

The following weekends we like to underline this important link between our liturgy and our work, ourselves, by inviting you to learn more about various ministries which are part of our mission as a community of faith. Tables at the back of the church will constitute a kind of ministry fair the next few weekends. We have also invited members who are involved in our many parish ministries to share with you the importance for our community of these necessary tasks as well as the joy and fulfillment they receive from ministering to others. You in turn are invited to discern for yourselves how you might contribute to the life of our community by sharing with us your gifts and talents.

Shalom.