

Msgr. Bill's Weekly Letter...

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I thought this excerpt from *Liturgy Training Publications* offers a concise summary of today's Gospel.

Today's parable from Matthew is notoriously difficult. Some have questioned the landlord's statement that he can do whatever he likes with his money, as it implies that he may be exploitive if he pleases. The parable seems to focus however on the landlord's generosity by juxtaposing two economics to make a statement about drastic change or complete reversal.

The economies on display are an exchange economy and a gift economy. An exchange economy is based on tit for tat agreement: you know which you will get in exchange for what you give. This economy is generally to the advantage of the owner, centering on cost, price, and profit.

Laborers, in exchange for their work, receive wages, but they will only receive what is rightfully earned and rarely more. An exchange economy can be described by the words, debt and obligation: laborers owe owners service or toil, and owners are obliged to pay laborers money.

In contrast, a gift economy declines this tit for tat calculation to operate by another principle. It goes by unmerited favor of extravagant generosity. Instead of something negotiated or agreed on, it turns calculation exchange into grounded magnanimity or, in Christian terminology, grace.

God's generosity with us should model our own interaction with each other. We see in Saint Paul's willingness to stop calculating what would benefit him and forgo his personal preference so he can imitate Christ and give to the Philippians.

Our Catechism teaches, *"Hence the laity, dedicated as they are to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and prepared so that even richer fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them. For all their works, prayers, and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit - indeed even the hardships of life if patiently born - all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist these may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord. And so, worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world itself to God, everywhere offering worship by the holiness of their lives."* (901)

Every worker has a God-given right to a living wage and decent conditions. I realize that there are tensions between labor and management. I am not sure how to resolve these tensions, but we must keep striving for solutions.

We must also diligently continue the Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy. *The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God:* (CCC 2447).



pace – bene,

Msgr. Bill