

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

Sharing the Faith; Sharing the Love

Last week, we completed the Five Precepts of the Catholic Church by discussing the Precept regarding our support of the Church's material needs. Although this column and the next one will discuss two Precepts that had been included in traditional lists of Precepts and are no longer part of the official Precepts of the Church, they are still important. You may remember that we discussed the Precepts of the Church as the minimum one should do as a Catholic Christian. The two Precepts we will discuss may be more than the minimum of what we *must* do, but they are part of what we *should* do as Catholic Christians.

At the end of the last column, we mentioned that the next Precept we would discuss was related to our support of the Church. It states that we are called to participate in the Church's mission of Evangelization of Souls. The first way that we can participate in the mission of evangelization is *through* the Church. This way of evangelization is directly related to providing for the Church. In our last column, we quoted the pertinent *Canon* that expresses this duty: "The Christian faithful are obliged to assist with the needs of the Church so that the Church has what is necessary for divine worship, *for the works of the apostolate and of charity*, and for the decent support of ministers." [CIC 222 §1, emphasis added] In other words, when we provide for the material needs of the Church, we participate in the evangelization efforts of the Church.

We mentioned in our last column the fact that St. Paul of the Cross has a Stewardship Account from which we provide for those in need. So, when you give to the Church, you are also giving to the evangelization efforts of our parish. According to the above *Canon*, we are also called to assist the Church by giving directly to those in need. "They are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor from their own resources." [CIC 222 §2]

In addition, we can participate in the mission of evangelization by participating in the ministries of our

parish. For example, we have a number of people who make sandwiches for the hungry. When the hungry receive these sandwiches, they are reminded of the love of God displayed by people who care. In addition to the Sandwich Ministry, we have many outreach ministries in our parish, such as St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Van Ministry, but these are not the only ministries that advance the mission of evangelization. For example, those who are part of our liturgical ministries, such as lectors, music ministers, or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, share in the mission of evangelization by helping us to worship God well. In fact, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion also bring Jesus Himself in the Eucharist to those who cannot be present for the Mass. We can also be a part of the ministries that provide for Religious Education, such as Bible Studies, Faith Formation for Children, and the RCIA program.

We can also participate in the mission of evangelization as individuals and we are called to do so. For example, as we meet with our friends, neighbors and co-workers, we are called to express our Christian faith, hope and love through our words and actions. In *The Code of Canon Law*, this duty is expressed, "Since, like all the Christian faithful, lay persons are designated by God for the apostolate through baptism and confirmation, they are bound by the general obligation [...] to work so that the divine message of salvation is made known and accepted by all persons everywhere in the world. [...] According to each one's own condition, they are also bound by a particular duty to imbue and perfect the order of temporal affairs with the spirit of the gospel and thus to give witness to Christ, especially in carrying out these same affairs and in exercising secular functions." [CIC 225] What does this *Canon* mean? We are called to live according to Christian values in all that say and do.

Next week, we will discuss the last of the traditional Precepts of the Church, the Precept regarding marriage and family.

