

# LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



## A Column by Fr. Tom

### Temporal Needs of the Eternal Church

Our discussion of the Precepts of the Church has led us to understand what part we play in the spiritual work of the Church. We have learned that we are called to participate in the divine worship of the Church by attending Mass and receiving the Eucharist. We have learned that we are called to do so worthily by celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation and observing the penitential acts of fasting and abstinence. In this last of the Five Precepts of the Church, we come to realize that we are also called to ensure that the work of the Church can continue in the physical world.

In the *Catechism*, this Precept of the Church is stated as, “The faithful also have the duty of providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his abilities.” [CCC 2043] In the *Code of Canon Law*, a similar statement is made: “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]

Many people would like to believe that the Church can exist only on spiritual goods; however, we come to realize fairly quickly that while FPL loves our prayers, they will not accept them as payment for the electric bill. Just as each one of us has bills that need to be paid, the Church does as well. It is only by taking care of the temporal needs of the Church that the spiritual and charitable works of the Church can be accomplished. In other words, if we don’t take care of the buildings, pay our employees, and, yes, even pay our taxes, we won’t have the facilities to assist the poor or even to bring the sacraments to our people.

As we consider this reality, we are grateful for the

many generous parishioners who help to provide for the material needs of our parish through our weekly collection and the special donations that they make to the parish. Even during this time of the current pandemic, and even during the time when we could not gather for Mass, many people have made a special effort to ensure that the Church could continue to tell the Good News, through the internet, as well as in person.

At this time, it would be beneficial for us to learn that the Church, especially the parish of St. Paul of the Cross, gives a portion of the donations that are received to charitable works. Just as many of you take a percentage of your weekly or monthly income and give that to the Church, St. Paul of the Cross does the same thing. About three years ago, we established a Stewardship Account that is constituted from a percentage of the weekly collection, which is set aside each week so that the parish can make donations itself to those who are in more need than we. For example, in each of the last two years, we had a collection to assist St. Mary Parish in Pahokee (a poor parish) with their religious education program. Many people gave to this collection and then St. Paul of the Cross matched the amount collected, so that the amount that St. Mary needed would be met. This is just one example of how that Stewardship Account is used.

While this column concludes the Five Precepts of the Church, you may remember that we mentioned two additional Precepts in our introduction to the Precepts of the Church. Next week, we will discuss one of these traditional Precepts – that we are called to participate in the Church’s mission of evangelization – which is related to our discussion today on the temporal needs of the Church.

