

A Reflection on Gift Giving and Gift Receiving

As we focus on this year's Haiti Solidarity Week theme, ***Relationship: Sharing Gifts***, you are invited to take time to gather a group from your parish community to reflect on the following scripture passages and excerpts from the book "Sharing Gifts in the Global Family of Life by Pakisa K. Tshimika and Tim Lind and then discuss the following questions:

- What has your experience of gift giving and receiving been with your Haitian twin?
- How has your relationship benefited through giving and receiving gifts?
- How can you foster the giving and receiving of gifts in your twinning relationship?

Gifts and Gifting:

I Cor: 12: 4-7, 11

"Now there are a variety of gifts but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but the same God who activates all of them in everyone."

God is the source of all gifts and has poured out these gifts to all creation as individuals, as a church and as a world community. A gift is something that is given; it is something that moves from one person to another. A gift is something given voluntarily; can not be forced or required. A gift is something given without regard to compensation. It is different from something sold or exchanged, where we expect equivalent value in return for what we give. If gifts cannot, or are not given, they die or rot, and this is contrary to God's intention.

Gifts and Needs:

I Cor 12:20-22

"As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye can not say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again, the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable."

The relationship between needs and gifts is one of the most difficult, and at the same time most critical issues in our consideration of sharing gifts. Gifts and needs can be seen as opposites, particularly when in our world, there are people who have the basic necessities for survival and those who do not. This sets up a polarized view that the world is made up of people with gifts and people with needs. Those who have material resources are the gift givers and those who do not have material resources are the gift receivers. If we believe that all creation is gifted then we must find another way to understand the relationship between people and gift sharing.

As a matter of faith we believe that those who struggle for survival are no less gifted than those who have material riches. What we need to begin to understand is that there are things that stand in the way of people being able to share their gifts. The poor, burdened with trying to survive, are not easily able to share the gifts they have. Likewise, the rich, bound by their fear of insecurity, their individualism and consumerism, often hoard their riches rather than sharing. Those whose gifts can not be nurtured, and those whose gifts are hoarded, face the same fundamental dilemma: how can each be freed to share their gifts with the other? The answer is in relationship: The rich and the poor have needs that the other can gift, which in turn, sets each other's gifts free to be given. In this way the rich and poor are interconnected. There is a mutual need and through relationship each can help the other.

Gifts and Community

I Cor: 7

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

It is through the sharing of gifts that relationships can be built, nurtured and strengthened. Gift sharing is about building up the interrelatedness of the “body” and building the Kingdom. It is essential that the global family develop a true sense of interrelatedness between people and an understanding of giftedness and gift sharing. We need to become more real, more connected to each other, not simply so we can have warm feelings toward each other, but so we can empower our respective gifts to further God's purpose; God's vision for the world.