

Second Saturday of Easter ~ 4/21

"And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the Word.'" (Act 6:2-4)

Well, how do we explain this statement that has issued from the mouths of the Apostles? If we were running for political office this is the type of statement that would find its way into our opponents' television ad. Can't you hear it now, "Peter the Apostle, wants to lead the church but says he is too good to wait on tables"? It might be easy to buy that line of thinking for, after all, didn't Jesus preach that the Apostles should be servants to the people. It doesn't sound like Peter is too interested in serving, does it.

A closer look might help to understand that there is more going on here than meets the eye. Remember that the Apostles had personally known Jesus and that Jesus had commissioned them to go out into the whole world to preach the Good News. It is difficult to complete that task if they find themselves stuck in one place taking care of a small group of people. Probably the frustration level is high because there is a work that they were uniquely qualified to do and they weren't able to do it because they were consumed with the hands-on activities of Christian life. It was obvious to them that they needed to organize the people so that the practical, day to day service could be done. This would also free the Apostles to preach and teach. What the apostles wanted was to do the work that they had been empowered to do and at the same time empower the early Christians to use the gifts of service that they had been given.

What may look like elitism is really realism. We cannot be all things for all people. We are only human, and so there will be certain works that one person is more suited for than another. What my gift to the community is will not be the same as yours. Frustration comes when we know that we have a certain gift to offer and it is not being used because we are busy doing the work that another might be better suited to do. What might seem to come across as arrogance on the part of the apostles is simply a statement of fact. Claiming our own gifts and enabling the gifts our neighbor, is what Christian leadership should be about.

Questions for Reflection

- 1. Do I find myself offering the service that I was meant to offer or the service that perhaps might be more appropriate for another to do?*
- 2. How do I know what service I am meant to do? How does God affirm my gifts?*

Prayer: Lord, I know that we are not all called to the same ministry. Help me to know and acknowledge my gifts and use them for the good of my neighbor.