

FROM THE PASTOR'S PRINTER

SHOWING NO PARTIALITY & YET SHOWING GRATITUDE

St. James, in today's reading, urges Christians to show no partiality to the rich and powerful over the poor and powerless as to where people sit in church. (This, of course, was written before there were church buildings with pews, and the most favored seat was the last pew in church.) Actually, St. James, in using the seating arrangement of the community at Mass, is really addressing how people are to be treated in any situation. Favoritism because of wealth or power, even when it is wealth given to, or power used for, the Church, is not to take place. This is not because the community of faith is not grateful for what it receives, but because God does not see wealth or power or popularity as making any difference in the value of the human person. He sees every human being as having the same value and worth because they are created in His image, and created with love equal to everyone else. Even the sinner is equal in value to the saint because he gave his Son over to death out of the same love for each person.

Even from the perspective of generosity, God does not measure by dollars and cents, but by what a person gives in proportion to their resources and situation in life. As we see in the story of the widow who dropped her last two coins in the Temple collection box, Jesus understood her generosity to be greater than those who dropped in large amounts, because it came from *all* she had, and not just extra money. We also find that Jesus exhorts us when donating "you are not

to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (which is what my attempts at piano playing sound like); "keep your deeds of mercy secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

The spirit of these passages is what lies behind the policy of acknowledging the gifts we have received for our new church. On the one hand, it is proper to acknowledge that the new church did not come from winning the lottery or from "shaking the money tree in the back yard," as my father used to say, but through the generosity of hundreds of individuals and families who sacrificed for this building out of love. It is part of our history. Whether someone gave a dollar or a million is not the issue; it is that they gave. On the other hand, there is the reality that God has a reward for the giver which is reserved for those who have not sought acknowledgement in this world for their generosity. (And God's reward is far greater than any recognition this world can give.)

To that end, as we have stated throughout the building campaign, we will have a Book of Gratitude, which will be kept in the gathering space of our new church, listing all who are honored or remembered through a donation, and all who gave, but not with the specific amount or category of the gift. We will also send each family a certificate acknowledging what was given as a sign of gratitude from the parish for that they have given.

CHURCH CHUCKLE

A little girl, bored with the homily at Mass, asked, "Mommy, if we give him the money, do you think that he would let us leave now?"