

Contemporary Epistle for November 4, 2018 at The Church of the Holy Apostles

Gratitude is a powerful Attitude

Count your blessings name them one by one. Count your blessings see what God has done. Count your blessings. Name them one by one. Count your many blessings see what God has done.

When I face uncertain circumstances or a challenge in my life, I have learned to pause and search for the good that is present in my life—you know, the blessings. I have found that by doing so, God shows up. Well actually, God was always there pouring out sacred grace and mercy even when I felt pessimistic and undeserving.

As we enter this season of Thanksgiving, it is appropriate to pause in our busy lives and examine them for the many things that are good and positive. To reflect on the many ways we have been blessed. To become aware again of just how much God has poured out grace on our everyday lives.

I am blessed with the security of a house that keeps me and my earthly possessions dry and warm. And we even have cable and internet! I am blessed with a job that provides sufficient income to not only support my family, but to save a little for the future, as well as provide my family with health insurance. I am blessed with good

running, safe vehicles to transport me wherever I need or want to go. I am blessed with an amazing wife who provides me daily examples of what it means to love thy neighbor and to do good. My children are a powerful reminder of what a blessing really is, at least when they're not asking for money. And I will soon be blessed with a grand daughter.

These are the concrete, physical, tangible, touchable blessings that God has poured into my life. But I have been blessed in the abstract realm as equally if not more. God has given me a talent for performing and acting, a discerning mind, a spirit of service to my community and abilities for leadership. And a super power—I am a teacher.

In addition, I am blessed to have found a spirit driven community of faith that looks to serve God through outreach and in reach in a spirit of love.

Pray, Serve, Give

When pastor asked me to speak today, I asked about the theme for this year's giving campaign. She said it's Pray, Serve, Give. I immediately thought of the movie with Julia Roberts based on the best selling book called *Eat, Pray, Love*. As I prayed about what to share today, this connection wouldn't leave my mind. Then it became clear to me! Eat, Pray, Love so captures who we are here at Holy Apostles.

However it is so much more. It is a process towards discerning what God is calling all of us as Christians to be through Christ Jesus. When we eat and pray together, we grow together in love. When we pray privately, seeking God's presence in our lives, we are guided towards giving of ourselves to others which in and of itself is serving. Serving God by serving God's children.

There are few things so delicious and wonderful as an Holy Apostles potluck! We are a people who enjoy sharing our gifts of food, talent for cooking, and time to come together as a family through food and fellowship. It is so much a part of who we are that we do it weekly. Every week a different group of folks plot together via email, phone call, and sometimes that old fashioned method of communicating, face to face, and come up with delicious dishes that tempt us all to stay after service and share in conversation and fellowship as believers in Christ Jesus. It's often a hearty meal that carries me through to supper time. So after we pray, we eat. We eat the offerings given by this week's Fellowship Crew. They serve us. We leave each Sunday not only having our souls nourished through corporate prayer and worship, but our bodies have been fed with really good food.

How is God calling you to participate in this fellowship ministry?

Each week we gather as a body of believers and worship our God through prayer. It's a production! So many elements have to come together for our weekly prayer service. There are the props, set dressing, and costumes. Sound effects and music. We gotta have a chalice, bread, wine, vestments, etc. the Altar Guild works behind the scenes to make certain that the vestments are just right, the altar is adorned appropriately for the season, the proper utensils are in place on the credence table, and so much more! Let's not forget the performers who lead us in worship—the lector's, acolytes, and lay ministers, Rick and the choir, The Sunday School leaders, father David and mother Kaitlyn. How about the ushers and greeters who begin your weekly experience when you arrive, offering you friendly smile and help finding your name tag. And how about Those who prepare our weekly script—the bulletin. All of these things come together in this magical mystical way each and every week so that we can spend an hour or so having our spirits renewed in Christ Jesus.

How is God calling you to more fully participate in our corporate prayer and worship?

I give and serve because God has given so many blessings to me. I give and serve because God loves. I give and serve because Christ Jesus lives in each one of us. By giving and serving, I am sharing God's love with others and God's Love grows stronger in my heart and life.

As we kick off this season of giving, I challenge you to pause and pray. Having been fed with Love, how will you Give and serve that Love.