



Theme: Come and Find Rest - July 6, 2014

Thought For The Week

Scriptures: Acts 12:1-11 • 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18 •
Matthew 16:13-19

I suspect that I am not so different from other people when I say that there are certain issues in life that are important to me. Here is a short list of the ones I hold fast to: good order, honesty, good leadership, and trustworthiness. There are a few others, but these stand in first place.

Now, of all the areas of life where these human qualities are important, let me insist that religion, faith, church membership etc. are of first importance. It is in the area of one's faith and participation in the church's life that we expect good leadership, wisdom and good order. In this area of faith it is also important for us to know that the one who is assigned to lead us will not betray us for the sake of some personal preference that he may have.

In regard then to the Community of Christ, I speak of the Prophet and President, his Counsels, the Apostles, Seventies and the order of Bishops. Of all the people we depend upon for spiritual leadership, the President always stands in first place.

I often reflect upon the spiritual life of the many other Christians around the world: all are good and faithful people, I'm sure. And it's always good for the assurance of one's faith to know that someone, someone guided by God's Spirit, cares enough about me to help me achieve my eternal salvation. I am insisting on all this because as a Community of Christ priesthood member I have the witness of nearly two hundred years of faith and history as a support.

Paul, the missionary who brought the good news of the kingdom of God to many parts of the Middle East and, in the course of history, to countries around the world; has always been a mainstay in my life. I have often sat and pondered what it was like for him. He must have been completely faithful to his ministry to accomplish all that he and his followers did.

If you have ever been present in Independence, MO for a World Conference, you will begin to see how important it is to our membership and many other devoted Christians to be able to witness almost two centuries of faith and dedication as it's actually taking place here and now. At that point many members probably say to themselves, "Wow, all this began when Joseph Smith questioned the religions of his time and went to God for direction. His faith and determination became the rallying point for our global membership today."

As I reflect on Christian history, I become more and more convinced that the gift of spiritual leadership is of immense importance for the continuing life of faith among the members of any church.

The model of leadership initiated by Paul has once again come to the surface, it gives hope and new life to the church at a moment in history when it was needed most.

Scholars who study the scriptures carefully are reluctant to say that Jesus intended to establish what we know today as the Catholic Church. Nonetheless, it seems clear from the words of Mathew's gospel—"You are Peter (rock) and on this rock I will build my church—" that these words of Jesus are obviously the foundation for the Catholic Religion and the many other Christian religions, including our own, as we know them today. People of faith have a deep longing for surety in their lives of faith. For Community of Christ members therefore, it is the Prophet and President, who continues to provide just such assurance for us today.

It is good to know that there is someone in the world who believes that his task (inspired by the Holy Spirit) is to lead us all to God. Doubtless, Peter and Paul would be delighted, I'm sure.

Prayer Thought For The Week

Great God of all nations and all people, we praise you and thank you for the bounteous blessings we have received at your hand.

We know we have not always been the persons you created us to be. Forgive us, we humbly pray, and continue to lead us into your path of peace for all.

At this time we pray for Qatar. May they continue to be a people among whom peace and justice are known. Guide them on their journey toward justice – justice in this world, justice and peace through your divine grace.

Even in this house of prayer, we have concerns and needs. Hear our personal petitions at this time, we ask. Plant in us the desire and understanding to fulfill your will – to continue our pursuit of that which is truly your shalom.

To you, gracious God, we give the praise and the honor and the glory, in the name of your precious Son, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Stewardship Thought For The Week

Where should I give? The mail arrives at the door and there they are again--letter after letter asking for a contribution. For the most part they are all worthy organizations in need of assistance--we'd like to support them all, but we can't--how do we decide? Do we choose the many Mission Center and World Church programs of our Community of Christ, the cancer society, the lung association, Salvation Army, March of Dimes, and so many others? "Where should I give?" is a question we may wrestle with, as so many worthy causes beg for our support.

Obviously we cannot give to everyone who asks. Choices have to be made. From Bible stories like the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), we know that God wants us to care about everyone including our enemies. In fact, God Himself showed the greatest care for all people when He sent His Son, Jesus, as the Savior of the world.

We also see, however, that Jesus had to make choices. Because limitations of time and space did not permit the disciples to go everywhere at once preaching the Gospel, Jesus sent them first to "the lost sheep of Israel" (Matthew 10:6).

Like a rock thrown into a quiet pond sending out ripples in the water, giving can most easily begin with our local church family to those in need who are closest to us. We might then expand our giving in our community, to groups in our Mission Center & World Church Organization and then on to other charities we may know less about. We need to remember, however, that wherever we decide to give we do it in a spirit of joy and gratitude to God for all He has given us. "Freely you have received, freely give."

(Matthew 10:8)