

**...As Any Had Need...**  
[Text -Acts 2:37-47]

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Throughout my ministry, I've tried to keep partisan politics out of the pulpit. [Of course since I'm rarely in the *pulpit*, I've had a little wiggle room!] That said, I care far less about people's political labels than about their personal lives. Perhaps one of the major hindrances to treating people with dignity and respect today, is the way in which we tend to *label* them. This allows us to dismiss them as being different or deficient; defective, or even dangerous! And once we've decided that those "others" are less trustworthy or valuable than we - and those who are like us - are, we then feel justified to treat them with suspicion or contempt, belligerence or even violence.

This past Sunday, I saw a news program about the meteoric rise of New York congresswoman, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. To those on Left, she's a spectacular dynamo. To those on the Right, she's a socialist demon. And while I personally find it too early to accurately assess her specific policy proposals, I am impressed with the basic rationale behind them all. Ocasio-Cortez says that for her, any proposed law or public action must be judged by this one basic criteria: "Does it promote the dignity of all people?" "Does it promote the dignity of all people?"

This morning's New Testament Reading gives us a fascinating look at the way in which the early followers of Jesus organized and prioritized their community. Act 2:44-46 says, "All who believed were together, and had all things in common. They would sell their possessions and goods, and distribute the proceeds to all, *as any had need*. Day by day, they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread in their homes, and shared their food with glad and generous hearts."

This benevolent behavior makes me wonder, "What would happen if we took this approach in our society today?" I realize that sounds a little naive, and a lot like *socialism*! But there we have it: the first

followers of Jesus living their lives as Jesus himself taught and showed them - with compassion and generosity, openness, inclusion and serenity. It make me wonder how so many self-proclaimed “Christian Values” politicians can support a 2019 federal budget proposal that [once again] benefits the wealthy, while cutting spending to programs for health care, food assistance, housing and home energy assistance, disability benefits; yet increases [once *again*] spending for massive military programs! These distorted priorities clearly contradict Christ’s teaching that we reject the false gods of war and wealth, and that we recognize that the genuine greatness of any society is gauged by the welfare of its most vulnerable members.

Now before anyone reports me for preaching Socialism, let me point-out that I’m simply reporting on how things *were* in the early Christian Church. Everyone gave everything they had to the community, to be distributed *according to each ones needs*. I’ll admit that this is an extremely difficult Biblical concept - not in a *theological* sense, but in regard to the social and political positions of many of us. It’s also problematic in regard to our *faith* - not our theological faith-system, but our actual faith and *trust* in the Holy One! It calls into question whether I truly trust that God [or God’s people] would take care of me, if I were to divest myself of all my worldly possessions?

Regardless of how you or I might feel about it, the call to share *all our stuff* is right there in the Scriptures. It’s the way in which Jesus and the early Church operated. Furthermore, there *are* Christian communities in the world today that actually strive for this ideal. Yet there are two primary factors that keep us from doing the same: our over-whelming *appetites*, and our under-whelming *faith*. In the United States, we consume an absurdly huge proportion of this world’s resources. We spend billions on diet pills and programs, while millions of people around the world die each year from malnutrition and starvation. The majority of us are actually quite wealthy, compared to the vast majority of the world’s population. Our profit-driven corporations span the globe to find people who will work for pennies to make our clothes and cosmetics, our computers and our all-important electronic gaming systems. Then there’s our mind-blowing military budget, which is *more*

than the other top 18 countries in the world combined!

There is a definite correlation between our over-whelming appetite for weapons and power, money and more stuff - and our underwhelming faith. Again, I don't mean "faith" as a theological understanding, but as a basic and genuine *trust* in the Holy One - and in the Holy One's care, provision, and protection for our lives. Our U.S. currency may say "In God We Trust", yet we keep-on piling-up more and more of that money, just in case God lets us down. We contend that God will ultimately protect us; nevertheless, we still make sure we have enough personal or national fire-power to blow-away anyone who frightens or threatens us.

This practice of stockpiling weapons and wealth contradicts a basic trust: that our Gracious Heavenly Parent fills the earth with sufficient resources to feed and clothe, house and secure us *all*! As Jesus shows us, if we truly trust our loving relationship with the Holy One, then we will spread the love around, and make sure that everyone has what she or he needs to live. We will judge our laws and our budgets, our political policies and our personal actions on this one basic criteria: "Does it promote the dignity of all people?" The beautiful thing that happens when people respect the dignity of others, and are willing to share what they have, is that the tension and strife within our communities and in our world will begin to diminish; and we will discover that there really is plenty for all of God's children.

Unfortunately, you and I can't depend on rich and power-hungry politicians to put the needs of the poor and the powerless before their own wants and desires. Fortunately, however we *can* depend on people like Sarah and organizations like Edna House to use the resources that we share today, to help and to potentially save the lives of women who struggle with addiction. We can continue to partner with other faith communities to keep our area food banks well supplied, and to provide hot meals to those who need them. Through our words and our actions, we can faithfully proclaim the Good News of Divine compassion and provision for all people. And like those first Christians, you and I can continue to pray and break bread together;

sharing our food - and our *lives* - “with glad and generous hearts!”