

THANKSGIVING DAY 2016
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
St. James 1.16 St. Matthew 6.25

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Good gifts and perfect presents...come to us from God...the Creator of the heavenly lights...and God does not turn his back on us or forget our needs.

The readings appointed for Thanksgiving Day teach us three important lessons about our faith:

- Everything we have comes from God
- We must share what we have with those who have little or nothing
- We should not spend so much time worrying about things over which we have no control

Father Peter Walters, founder of "Let the Children Live", spoke at last Sunday's Discussion Group about his work among the street children of Medellin, Colombia. They were once called *Los Desechables...the Disposable Ones*. Although that name is no longer commonly used, these children are at high risk of becoming victims from the violence of the streets and shanty-towns they call home.

Many of the children are the poorest of the poor, abandoned by their poverty-stricken parents. Others are orphaned and left to fend for themselves on the streets. They resort to stealing food to survive. Many are victimized by a society incapable or unwilling to help them...they are "disposable"...many end up dead.

Father Peter told the compelling story of the time he suddenly found himself stranded in Medellin without food or housing. "Homeless" and wandering the streets, he was approached by some street children. When they heard his story, they were amused the grown-up stranger was homeless and hungry. The street children nobody loves shared what little food they had with him.

While we are enjoying our Thanksgiving dinner tonight, we need to remember what Saint James tells us...everything we have comes from God. We should take time to thank him for our food, homes and health. And we must do more than just think or talk

about those who have little or nothing...those who are less fortunate than we are.

James tells us for our faith to be real we must put it into action. We must not just talk the talk...we must walk the walk. We must show love and compassion toward others...the visceral kind of love and compassion James calls true and genuine religion...the kind of religion that reaches beyond the four walls of this building.

This year Saint Joseph Parish supplied CALL Primrose with 15 boxes for their Fill-a-Box/Feed-a-Family program. Our food contributions helped CALL provide over 400 needy families with Thanksgiving meals. We must continue to support CALL and look for opportunities to do more. And there is plenty of work to be done.

Jesus tells us not to worry so much about where our food or clothing is coming from or what will happen tomorrow. That's a hard sell to those who have little or nothing...like the street children of Medellin. Father Peter is doing his part to make certain the street children of Medellin have a brighter future...so they don't have to worry about where their food and clothing is coming from. Actions do speak louder than words.

Thanksgiving Day is about giving thanks to God for his many blessings...and we have much to be thankful for. The question we should ask ourselves today is what more can we do to help those who are less fortunate? If we say we can do nothing...that's the wrong answer.

Our efforts to help others must reach out beyond Saint Joseph Parish...even beyond our own community...perhaps we too can touch the lives of the street children of Medellin...so they will never again be called *Los Desechables...the Disposable Ones*.

Saint James tells us our faith must be active...not passive or indifferent. Let's make certain it is...and not just on Thanksgiving Day.

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