

Once a year a former parishioner of Sacred Heart Church returns to his former house of worship and makes a generous contribution in support of the parish school. Years ago, all his children were enrolled in the school and graduated upon completing the eighth grade. He simply desires to show his profound appreciation for the Catholic education his children received in years gone by. The generous donor always insists that his contribution remain anonymous. His name must never be mentioned. I respect his decision, and always comply with his demand.

In today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles we are introduced to Barnabas, a key player in the Jerusalem Christian community and its mission. Barnabas served as a missionary and befriended the great Apostle to the Gentiles, St. Paul.

Barnabas had a desire to share what he had with the fledgling Christian church. In the fourth chapter of Acts, we read, "He sold a piece of property that he once owned, then brought the money and put it at the feet of the disciples" (Acts 4:37). By all accounts, his donation must have been considerable. It probably came in answer to prayer because, at the time, the little band of Christians was impoverished. One can only marvel at his generosity, a generosity that was utterly spontaneous. No one forced his hand or twisted his arm. Here we can learn a valuable lesson. In the words of noted scripture scholar, William Barclay, "It is not when the law compels us to share but when the heart moves us to share that society is truly Christian."

So often when we give, if we give at all, we do so begrudgingly and with no enthusiasm. It is as if we were somehow inconvenienced and unfairly put on the spot! Regrettably, there are some among us today who withhold donations or simply show no interest in relieving the financial burdens of the parish. But any pastor will tell you that the benefactor of a church, usually a man or woman of great faith, is one of the unsung heroes of the faith community and a treasure to be cherished. They are heaven sent! The prayer of the pastor has been heard by the Lord.

Let us be cheerful givers.

Let there be no needy persons among us (Acts 4:34).

Let us always bear witness to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus! (Acts 4:33)