

Reflections

On

A Common Rule for Monastics



Worldly Things

(Chapter 12)

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“... we use what we have been given in the service of others

Chapter 12, Paragraph 4, Lines 6-7

There is a chorus that says, ***“Count your blessing, name them one by one, and it will surprise what the Lord has done.”*** This is a good place from which to start if we ever thought that we do not have enough to give to serve others.

We are reminded in scripture, that all good gifts come from above, from the Father of Lights (James 1:17). All of our material, as well as spiritual blessings are a gift from a Loving Father. This is the same Lord who questioned us, by asking, “If evil fathers can give good gifts, how much more can your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit (a great gift)? Matthew 7:11 paraphrased.

We see here that God, our Heavenly Father, is delighted to bless us with both material and spiritual gifts. Our response to these blessings, should be, to be a blessing to others. As I journey on this new path, I endeavor to be a blessing to others, in response to the grace of God. Also having been reminded in the chapter on ***Service***, that love is another word for service, this love must extend to those in need of the gifts and talents with which we were blessed. “And they will know you are Christians by your love/service.”

“Use what you have been given.” What exactly have we been given? Let’s start with the intangible: grace, salvation, wisdom, mercy, forgiveness, a sound mind, love and life in Christ. These qualities alone are great gifts to share with others. We do a service to others by telling them of the love of Christ and joy of living in it. Yes, this chapter focuses on *Worldly Things*, but perhaps if we are not possessed of the spiritual graces, we may not be minded of serve others with our “worldly things.”

“But I don’t have much worldly possessions!” That may be the cry of many, perhaps as an excuse for not serving, or not realizing that someone can benefit from the excess they have, no matter how miniscule.

So let’s get practical. What does a person of normal means have to offer? If she has a car, she can offer a ride to someone who has no car, but needs to do shopping or go to church or on any other errand. Also, instead of buying that expensive cappuccino, perhaps a homeless person can get lunch.

What about the spiritual gifts that we have been given? We can use knowledge of the Word and Wisdom of God to encourage the anxious, the depressed, the lonely, etc. We can also use our time to be there and comfort someone who just need to vent.

Service/Love is the identifying mark of the Christian. Our Lord said that what we do for the less fortunate among us, we do for Him (Matthew 25:36). He also said that we are identified as His disciples because of our love/service to and for one another (John 13:35).

One of my favourite passages of Scripture is **Acts 4:32-35**. I refer to it as Christian Socialism, better yet, pure Christianity. Here the Christians ensured that the needs of all were met. If only we, who name the name of Jesus, would get back to our original way of doing things. I have been disappointed of how good we are at **keeping** church, but very poor at **being** the Church.

When we must **detach** ourselves from worldly things, serving other with what we have been given will be easier. If we are too attached to worldly things, we would want to hold on to them, and frustrate the process of serving through giving of our worldly (and spiritual) possessions.

True, genuine and loving service is possible when we see through the eyes of our true selves. Seeing only oneness. Seeing only abundance instead of scarcity. Beholding Christ in all. The True Self realizes, like the Church in Acts 4, what's mine is yours.

Service to others must be for the benefit of the ones served. Yes, we may feel great about serving, but it is not about us. If we are not doing it for them, if we are doing it for the camera or for accolades, we are **not** doing it from a place of genuine love and service.

We fulfil the Law of Christ when we bear each other's burden (Galatians 6:2).