Are We All In?

 Are we “ALL IN.” The mission God has entrusted to us, His church—is to make disciples everywhere we go by praising Christ in everything we do. This mission can only be successful if each one of us is “ALL IN”. Every one of us is called to a ministry. And every one of us is equipped by God for that ministry.

 In our second reading today, Paul teaches that every Christian is uniquely equipped by God for service. Verse 7 stresses, **“to each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.”**Paul stresses that every believer is gifted by God to serve. God equips us to serve in more ways than just by giving us spiritual gifts.

 We are each born with unique natural abilities. God has given us these abilities for us to utilize them for His glory, to accomplish His mission, to build up His Bride, the Church.

 In addition, we each have acquired various skills. God has providentially led us to sharpen these skills—both general skills and highly specialized ones—so that we can accomplish His mission.

 We also have unique passions that God has placed within us. God has implanted those passions within us for a purpose—to propel us to make an eternal difference in the world by making disciples.

 Lastly, we each have varied experiences that have shaped us. In God’s providence, He has led you down the path you’ve traveled in order to shape you for specialized, spiritual service. Even our greatest afflictions are meant by God to enable us **“to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God”.**

 We each have so much to offer to the life of the Body of Christ! A famous preacher once said, **“What do you have to offer? More than you probably think. You have the gifts and talents you were born with. The passions that inspire you. The blessings of education. The skills you’ve honed as you’ve worked at home or in the marketplace. The life experiences that have matured you. The pain that has deepened you. The love of neighbor that spills from God’s heart into yours.”**

 We also know that God has uniquely equipped each of us so that we can work together to accomplish a unified purpose. Paul stresses that we’ve been equipped by God **“for some benefit.”**This means your gifts, talents, skills; passions and experiences are not ultimately for you, but for Him. You are individually equipped so that WE—the church together—can accomplish His mission.

 There are four ways we should respond to knowing we’ve been equipped for ministry.

1. **Respond with humility**. We respond to these truths with humility, recognizing that everything we’ve received comes from God. We can’t boast in anything except His graciousness to us.
2. **Respond with gratitude**. Thank God for every gift, talent, passion and experience He has given you. Thank Him for using you to make a difference.
3. **Respond with love**. In the next chapter of Corinthians, Paul shows us the “more excellent way” of love. Our love, not our spiritual gifts, leadership positions or sacrificial service is the evidence of true spirituality.
4. **Respond with service**. Look for ways to use your gifts, talents, passions and experiences to make a Christ-exalting impact in the life of another person.

Jesus says in today’s Gospel reading that, **“My hour has not yet come.”** But, what does he do? He listens to His mother and He performs His first miracle. I say to all of you today, **“Our time has come!** It is our time to be **“ALL IN!”**

 What does that mean? For me it means that I must try to be the best husband, father, deacon and attorney I can be for the sake of the kingdom. God has given me certain gifts and talents to further His kingdom. I cannot leave them on the shelf and say someone else can do it. I have an obligation to share them with the world. That’s right I said an **OBLIGATION!** They are not for me, but for **HIS Kingdom!**

 So what does this mean for you? The same thing it means for me. We all should discern our God given gifts and talents and commit ourselves to using them for the furtherance of God’s kingdom. **It is our obligation!** As I said earlier, we must respond in humility, gratitude, love and service.

 You ask yourself, why is this so important? I believe it is the only way we will ever turn this world around.

Let me finish with a story. This story happened during World War II. After D-Day, American soldiers pushed the Nazis out of France. As each village was liberated, a contingency of GI’s was left behind to restore order. While occupying these towns and cities, they helped the citizens re-establish authority such as local law enforcement. Our armed forces also helped them with the enormous task of cleaning up what the bombings had destroyed.

 In a particular town, one of the first buildings the people asked to be repaired was their cathedral. As the pews and altar in the sanctuary were returned to their rightful place, a statue of Jesus was found on the floor. His hands had been broken off and could not be found in the rubble. While they were trying to decide what to do about replacing Jesus’ hands, they put the statue of Him by the altar where it once stood.

 One day, the people were amazed at what a soldier had printed on a piece of paper and attached to the statue. It read, **“He has no hands, but yours.”**

 It is said that the statue’s hands were never replaced, and the message with its profound words remains there to this day.

 Our Lord often repeated the phrase, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” I know He meant the kingdom of heaven was near, but could there be more significance to the phrase? I wonder if He was saying we should reach out to those near us, especially those in need, the way He would if He were walking on the earth. Since all Christians are His followers, we are His hands.  Remember, He has no hands, but ours. Are you **“ALL IN?”**