Refection By: Deacon Paul Hursh

“Those who do justice will live in the presence of the Lord.”(Cf. Psalm15) … and how are we to accomplish even a little justice in our time and place. We can first look to the examples of justice leaders in our time; people like St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Dorothy Day. In each of these cases they saw that their personal relationship with God could not exist on its own, but had to be lived out of a life of working for the justice of one’s neighbors. This is an uncommon outlook, especially today, where we tend to look after our own needs first, and are encouraged to do so by many financial advisors and retirement planners. If we only share our resources, after we have “paid ourselves first,” will we ever look after the needs of others? This is something that, when we are reminded of it, our conscience is pricked and it becomes the cause of guilty feelings. To their credit, there are many who choose to do something about these guilty feelings. We may become active in our parish’ homeless outreach, join the Knights of Columbus, or support the OLPH Orphanage in Jeremie, Haiti. These are all good ways to respond to the cry of the poor in our parish.

When we give of our time and resources to comfort the homeless, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, visit the sick and imprisoned, we are doing justice. When we speak on behalf of those without a voice, the unborn and undocumented, we are doing justice. Not only are we doing justice in the name of God, we are encountering Jesus in the
faces of the littlest and the least. (Matthew 25:31-46) We are guided by age-old principles beginning in our Jewish roots, and proclaimed by Jesus in his kingdom proclamation of good tidings to the poor (Luke 4:18-19), and espoused by his Mother in her canticle (Luke 1: 46-55), that God “… has thrown down the rulers from their thrones, but lifted up the lowly.”

The challenge of doing justice in the context of our daily lives is brought to clarity in our Gospel this Sunday. (Luke 16: 1-13) It is simply this, we must make a choice between the World and the Kingdom – whom will we serve. Regardless of whom we serve, we will be called to account for our actions. We need to be wise in the things of this world to provide for our families and for ourselves, but where will our deeper allegiance rest? Will it end with our own needs or will we participate in the building of the Kingdom of God as worthy stewards of the larger reality? The reality is that we are all God’s children, and as Christians we are called to serve the common good with love and mercy and justice. As Paul emphasizes in today’s excerpt from his letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 2: 1-8) the Kingdom we are building is for ALL God’s children, not just those who profess the same faith we profess. God is the God of all peoples, and Jesus came to save everyone, not just our own tribe.

As Jesus implies in today’s Gospel we are prudent if we spend our passing wealth for the benefit of our needy brothers and sisters as a way of storing up wealth in the Kingdom. Using our worldly resources in this way is only prudent. Using our wealth in this way is a good way to make sure our wealth does not become a dead idol that replaces our living God. Like the Charles Dickens’ character, Ebenezer Scrooge, we will find that amassing wealth does not attain happiness; rather it is in caring for our fellow human beings that we can gain true happiness, both in this world and the next.