

Remain Anchored in Your Community

Romans 12:11-13

Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

Paul, like all of us, counted on the hospitality of our Christian community to get us through hard times. It is like a lifeline at times. We can always count on it being there for us when we are sinking. But we can also be a lifeline for others as well. Mutuality is what sustains community. It is never one-sided. Needs and pain are not just for a portion of the population. They fall upon all of us at different times. That is why we need to look at our own pain, as well as the pain of others. Paul commands us to help needy Christians. Doing this creates oneness and unity.

Henri J. Nouwen, no stranger to pain and the healing of others, says, "It is important to remain as much in touch as possible with those who know you, love you, and will protect you. . . Think about your community as holding a long line that girds your waist. . . Your community can pull you back when its members see that you are forgetting why you were sent (out by God)." In this kind of community, where everyone understands they are a lifeline for others, we can feel safe and loved. That is what we can do for others in this time of need.

We are called to remain anchored to our community in this time of isolation by phone, letters, emails and cards. We still have the means to connect with one another and distribute what Paul calls "practicing hospitality." With the command to be hospitable there comes a necessary determination of the community----being responsible. In fact, to be hospitable is to be responsible. It means you have determined that everyone in your community is your responsibility. When this is accepted as the rule then everyone has a lifeline. There is no one person that stands outside this responsibility. It is not that there is a perfect equity of action, there is always a sacrificial nature to our responsibility. When this is understood there is a sense of embrace and love that transcends our own pain.

By holding on to this responsibility as an ethical and spiritual action, we hold on to the hope that we are contributing to the betterment of our community. In this time of trouble, we have the chance to show our community that we love them, through the nature of our hospitality in Christ. As I am writing this, I am thinking of many of you whom I will be calling. This is not just my obligation; it is my privilege to be connected to you. Stay well, stay safe and pray always.

Steve