

“Glorify the Lord with me...”

Last weekend, our parish showed the DVD of Bishop Bruskewitz’s Charity and Stewardship Appeal. The theme for this year’s appeal is “Glorify the Lord with me,” taken from Psalm 34. I was deeply moved by the theme chosen for this year’s appeal and the art work used to express it. The pope and the bishop, hands joined in friendship and mutual esteem, smiles breaking out on their faces, the joy of fellowship they share in Christ.

Certainly, the picture captures the personal friendship of Pope Benedict and Bishop Bruskewitz. They know one another, and the Holy Father knows our diocese. We have a reputation, cultivated over decades, of outstanding fidelity and generosity to the Church. Since the beginning of Bishop Bruskewitz’s service in our diocese, we have given the Church three bishops, and currently have three priests working in the Roman Curia, Monsignor Thomas Fucinaro in the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Monsignor James Reinert in the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and our most recent gift, Fr. Richard Gyhra who serves the office of the Vatican Secretary of State as a diplomat in the Dominican Republic. However, the picture of the Pope and Bishop expresses a deeper reality, which I believe is the greatest gift we have given the Church in the United States and the world: the unity of these two men is a sign of the communion of our hearts in the Church. We are known as a diocese that has not bent to the winds of change in the Church, but has held steadfast to the faith of the apostles. We live communion. Communion is the mystery of the Church, our union with Christ and our unity with those who believe in Him. Communion is us, our life and our mission.

Our scripture passages today point to the source of our communion: the Holy Spirit. From the Acts of the Apostles we heard the story of the dispute and the disruption within the community of Jesus' followers regarding the question of circumcision among the Gentiles. The apostles and presbyters gathered in Jerusalem to study and pray about the matter, and following their decision, communicated it by letter to the Christians of Antioch using these words: "It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us." What a remarkable way of expressing themselves. The Holy Spirit led them to the answer they needed for this new problem in the Church. Jesus had promised, as our Gospel relates, "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you." This took place, and it is our belief that the Holy Spirit continues to guide us, in every age, as new questions and problems surface. It is the Holy Spirit who guides us to the truth, thereby sustaining us in one communion of love.

Detractors of the faith have also existed in every age, from the apostolic times to the present. They have disrupted communion by their obstinate hearts or their sinful actions. Some of these left to form their own communities of faith. Others wounded the Church by their actions, led people astray and harmed the reputation and credibility of the Church in the eyes of believers and non believers alike. We see this today in the abuse cases against minors that have surfaced in the past fifty years which was further aggravated by some in authority who mishandled the problem. The Bishops of our country met in Dallas in 2002 and developed the rules which address this problem. This required the collaboration of the authorities in Rome, where Church law was changed to expedite the penalties for crimes of this kind. Clearly, the Holy Spirit guided these decisions, and the Holy Spirit is active in the entire Church, breathing the healing and forgiving winds of His

presence among us, as well as the gifts of courage and wisdom among our leaders, helping us trust again, love again, and live communion again as the Body of Christ. Two men in particular, who have been steadfast shepherds of communion are Pope Benedict and Bishop Bruskewitz. It is an incomparable blessing to us to be shepherded by such men. They stand, as every good shepherd should, not to do their own will but to follow the will of God, not to seek the esteem of others, but to serve the people entrusted to their care. As we have watched Pope Benedict and Bishop Bruskewitz during the past years, we see them faithful in their proclamation of the faith of the apostles, balanced in their decisions, builders of communion, lovers of Christ and the Church. They speak with integrity and credibility. They believe what they teach. They practice what they preach. They inspire those around them; they are an inspiration to us.

When Bishop Bruskewitz, uniting himself with Pope Benedict, invites us to “Glorify the Lord with me,” he is asking us to share in his mission and ministry of communion, which he has embraced for the glory of the Lord. United with him, we too will glorify the Lord.

How does the mission and ministry of Bishop Bruskewitz glorify the Lord? It puts into physical form our diocesan expression of living Jesus’ command to love one another. We cannot say, “I love you” and not provide a cup of cold water if you are thirsty. We cannot say, “I will teach you the way of the Lord,” and not provide the programs and activities for young and old alike that enable them to hear the word of the Lord and encounter Him. Communion is not an idea; it is a labor of love. Bishop Bruskewitz is inviting us to share in the charitable work of the diocese, which is an expression of our love for one another and for God. Through these programs and activities, we give glory of God. They include housing and

relief programs of Catholic Social Services, youth programs, our diocesan retreat center, retirement care of our religious and lay employees, the hispanic ministry, the diocesan investment and loan fund, pro life and family life programs. Included in the charitable work of the diocese is our Catholic Schools, which this program is specifically designed to assist. These are the services of our diocese that express our communion with God and one another. This is how we glorify the Lord.

On behalf of Bishop Bruskewitz, I ask for your financial help to the 2010 Bishop Bruskewitz Charity and Stewardship Appeal. Let our gift be an expression of our communion with Bishop Bruskewitz and one another, worthy of the invitation we have received, to glorify the Lord together as the Catholic people of southern Nebraska.