

keep their spirits up, smiling as they greet and assist one another, and celebrating together with nourishment, song and dance on whatever civil, religious or personal anniversary they can find. Their devotional faith life, especially in processions, reminds them that those who have little can better appreciate their total daily dependence upon God. Could this be the key to divesting, living simply, and letting God provide?

The Kingdom of God, after all, is meant for everyone. One must commit to contributing to the common good in order to inherit eternal life. People with great riches must be greatly generous in order to enter the Kingdom of God and it is God's great love and mercy, combined with the interdependence of all believers, and not their efforts alone, that get them through the needle's eye. Here in Canto Grande prayer for those who offer generous assistance through the Church or humanitarian charity is common and sincere. So is the compassion shown for our brothers and sisters from Venezuela forced to survive as refugees here in Peru.

May Jesus challenge us and enable us by his grace to live that mission to which he invites us, free from being possessed by our possessions and enabling others to be fully human and fully alive, following him.

Fr. John P. Phalen, C.S.C., was received into the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1966, and was ordained in April 1974. Currently, he is the Director of Novices for the United States Province in Peru, and prior to his current assignment, served 18 years with Holy Cross Family Ministries which includes Family Rosary, Family Theatre Productions, and the Fr. Peyton Family Institute. He has also served in parishes, in the mission in Peru, and with formation in the United States.



A publication of the Congregation of Holy Cross,  
United States Province of Priests and Brothers  
Office of Development  
P.O. Box 765, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-0765  
[www.holycrossusa.org](http://www.holycrossusa.org)  
[development@holycrossusa.org](mailto:development@holycrossusa.org)



## MONTHLY REFLECTION SERIES

The Needle's Eye  
and the Kingdom without Riches

by Fr. John Phalen, C.S.C.

If there is a Scripture passage that contradicts our consumerist society, it is Mark 10:17-31! A good man comes running to Jesus and throws himself on his knees before him indicating that this encounter is urgent in his estimation. Perhaps he wants to be affirmed for all the ways he has been obedient to God's commandments. His record is a good one; he has killed no one, he has not committed adultery, nor has he stolen or given false testimony. He has taken care of his parents. He has shown love for his neighbor and for God. As far as the Hebrew Testament is concerned, he has done it all from his youth. Reading this we want to congratulate him.

But, the man wishes to know more, and Jesus has more to ask of him. Giving him a loving gaze, he says, "If you would be perfect, sell what you have and give it to the poor and you will have a treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me." Alas, the man becomes sad and walks away, for he had many possessions. He just could not part with that Ferrari-class camel of his, nor could he ever squeeze it through a needle's eye. I remember reading somewhere that there was a narrow gate in Jerusalem called "The Needle's Eye", through which it was difficult to ride your overburdened camel. You had to divest, like the truck driver letting air out of his tires to get his rig under an overpass.

It is not that the Lord glorifies poverty. Being poor is not fun or even healthy. And Jesus does not want us to be destitute. But he does want us to consider the needs of those who have next to nothing while others have too much. Being truly human from the New Testament perspective means sharing what we have with the needy. This is following Jesus' lead. The more we have, the more is expected of us. And it's not only financial resources that Jesus asks us to share, it's our very selves, our time, our talent, our insight and willingness to be of help.

---

**“The more we have, the more is expected of us.”**

---

This man was a good man, even though Jesus reminds him, "Only God is good." But he went away sad, possessed by his possessions. And this did not allow him to respond positively to the vocation to which Jesus, who looked upon him lovingly, was inviting him.

We may not have this same vocation. The man could have been one of Jesus' closest disciples. Our state in life may not

allow us to simply let go of everything. People depend upon us. But when we ask the Lord, "What more can we do?" he reminds us that we could always be more generous. We can always find ways to help those who lack essentials, regardless of their race, language or religious affiliation. Making the world a more human place, more peaceful, more just, more alive with God's word: this is the mission of the Church.

Working with people in need in Peru, I notice how theirs is a communal perspective, and they are likely to share a portion of what has been given them immediately with a neighboring family they know that suffers even greater need. I am repeatedly amazed at the resilience of families living at the subsistence level high in the hills of Canto Grande, Lima. Descending interminable stairways (each step a different height, pitch and depth, and some steep sections with no stairs), and ascending them carrying burdens after a hard day's selling of goods at the public market, the people

