

*CRIBB<S>NOTE – February 1, 2009*

There is plenty good reason to be in church today. The daily menu of job losses, economic downturns, foreclosures, and all-round bad news is more than enough to drive people to faith. After visiting Dubai and West Africa last month, I am convinced the practice of investing in stocks and bonds that has resulted in devastating outcomes for so many people should cause us to think differently.

For example, as we go forward, we may want to look at investing in people and human services. Instead of looking for the quick money or high risk options, it may be prudent to identify people with great skills, talents, and special gifts to use our money to support and back their efforts. That is non-traditional from the way Wall Street seduces its customers. Instead of pouring money into corporations (real and virtual), it might make more sense to support micro-economic projects that bolster small businesses, artisans, and craft-persons.

We have to begin to look at things differently. We need visionaries who can help us dream about new possibilities and create opportunities for more people to build livelihoods that are self-sufficient. In this special period of deteriorating financial institutions and failing financial markets, perhaps it is worthwhile to consider how to better serve masses of people who have been left behind. Can we see another way?

In the story about Jesus in the temple, we observe him using his power to save a life without condemnation. Jesus speaks directly to the source of the disturbance without compromising the dignity or humanity of the person affected. There is a lesson for us. People are struggling with situations beyond their control. They are seeking help but find little relief.

On the other hand, many of us are observing the destruction of lives, including families, without getting involved. We are watching to see what will happen next. We can and we must do better. We are called to struggle for justice and make a greater effort to correct the harm and damage meted against our sisters and brothers. We need to take a step in a different direction that calls into question activities that threaten the welfare of our nation and community. We need a healing that can only come by touching people who are hurting.

In this special period, let us turn to God for guidance. Let us pray for the courage to do what is bold and new. Let us be uncomfortable with common experiences that drag our spirits down. Let us commit ourselves to act with the love and compassion of Christ to be an unexpected surprise that makes life beautiful, even for the down-trodden and broken-hearted.