

Have you ever thought of Jesus as an economist? Imagine someone in today's economic climate giving this advice: "If someone takes your coat, let them have your shirt. Give to all who beg from you. When someone takes what is yours, don't ask for it back. Lend without expecting repayment." No candidate in New Hampshire last week would hire an advisor like this.

Jesus takes on two big themes in today's Gospel, economics and relationships. And the principles of one work for the other. Take economics, for example. What underlies Jesus' economy is community. What belongs to one belongs to all. It's not so bad to have possessions, but it's more important to share them. If you want to know what somebody values, look at how they spend their money. In this context, I want to praise the work of the Stewardship Council and the Parish Council at St. Regis. We've recently been asking the question, "Does our budget really reflect what's important to our parish?" We'll soon be asking you if we've listened well to Jesus the economist.

The other theme Jesus presents is relationships. He says, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you and pray for those who maltreat you. When someone slaps you on one cheek, turn and give the other." It is hard to pray for persecutors. In fact, in the past, when someone has harassed me, I've tried to pray for them, and some days I can, but some days I can't. If your persecutor is stronger or just knows how to get you, to fight back the way they fight us is to lose. Our best weapon is to behave with honor, and honor will win.

With Jesus, what is common about economics and relationships is they both involve the needy--the materially bankrupt, and the spiritually bankrupt; those who cannot own and those who cannot relate. The key to honor is to care less for ourselves and more for others, whether they are the poor or the persecutors.