

The most common experience that we Catholics share is the celebration of the Mass. At every Mass, after the Eucharistic Prayer, we all stand and pray the "Our Father." As one, we repeat the very words given to us by Jesus.

Think about that prayer for a minute. In fact, you might even pause here and say the Our Father, paying special attention to those words:

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be..."

Back in the third century, someone else spent time reflecting on that prayer. St. Cyprian, a bishop known as "the African pope," wrote:

"We do not say: 'My Father, who art in heaven,' nor 'Give **me** this day **my** bread,' nor does each one ask that only **his** debt be forgiven him and that **he** be led not into temptation and that **he** be delivered from evil for himself alone. Our prayer is **public and common**, and when we pray, we pray not for **one** but for the **whole people**, because **we**, the whole people, **are one**."

In the early Church, believers understood that they were not just individuals gathering to worship. They were a community, the living Body of Christ. They were a family, dependent on one another, and responsible to one another.

We see this in Acts when Luke tells us "the community of believers was of one heart and one mind...they had everything in common." (Acts 4:32)

It is why the Christian community in Philippi supported Paul, "not only once but more than once," when he left them to build up the Church in Thessalonica. (Phil. 4:16)

It is why Peter, James and John supported Paul's work among the Gentiles, only reminding him "to be mindful of the poor." (Gal. 2:10)

Our Catholic Stewardship Appeal continues this tradition of a faith that finds its life in our familial care of one another and of those in need beyond the borders of our community. You gave generously in the past. Please consider supporting our diocesan family once again. Then complete the giving coupon on this letter and return it in the enclosed envelope. To contribute online, go to the giving page on our website www.diojeffcity.org and click on **2018 Catholic Stewardship Appeal**.

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