

## Life in community

### Bible Scripture: Acts 4:32-37

<sup>32</sup> All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. <sup>33</sup> With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all <sup>34</sup> that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales <sup>35</sup> and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), <sup>37</sup> sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Jesus's resurrection calls us to tangible acts which coincide with human need.

In the earlier chapters of Acts, Peter and John have been seized because of their preaching how God had risen Jesus from the dead and continuing to show his love and compassion through the disciples, healing the lame beggar that was at the gate called Beautiful.

Between chapter 4:36 and 5:1-11 there is a notable contrast. Luke opens a broad panorama to his readers with positive and negative examples of a community practice, required for a community in need, which was to sell their property (fields) and share the profit to benefit those in need. In verse 34, there is a positive example about Joseph, nicknamed Barnabas, who sold his property and brought the money to the apostles' feet. In contrast, in chapter 5:1-11, a married couple kept back part of the money and failed the expectations of the community to share everything they had. Now that I am married and there are more expenses, I believe I would have done the same, or even more! Possibly I would have not given anything at all depending on my situation. This is a personal experience to the text.

It seems that Luke writes these two stories to refresh our memory - the ideal of sharing in a community was a reality but it is not always so in every case in life. Perhaps the story of Ananias and Sapphira metaphorically represents a community that dies when it decides to think and act for its own benefit before thinking and acting in a way which benefits other communities.

Or maybe that community represents those who claim to love God, but robbed what could eliminate hunger and misery which our communities are living in.

I refuse to believe in a god that causes a capital death, even though in the passage we see the death of the couple attributed to God. In every theology class we have been burying that god now we believe in a different God – a God of abundant life.

Today we see many pastors that have become businesspersons and traffickers of religion interpreting passages such as Ananias and Sapphira to obtain wealth at the expense of the faith, innocence and sincerity of the people.

It's true that we all do not think or act in the same way as human beings. But when we believe in the work of God, we have empathy in the suffering of the other, by accompanying and crying with those that have lost everything. When we feel the pain of those that have been violated, then we bring alive that community of Acts, because we share that suffering together.

I believe that each of us is resurrected every time we believe can't continue anymore, in every difficult process of life. CEDEPCA, resurrects each year - when it is thought that the work can't continue. But then something happens, and the reason is simple - God resurrects us, so we can love ourselves, share and enjoy our lives, and from this point on we can share that experience of accompanying, crying, and alleviating the pain of our brothers and sisters in suffering.

May God continue helping us to lay our abilities and knowledge at the service of those most vulnerable. It might be possible that we will not be able to create a utopic community as the one described in Acts, but when we share, walk and support someone, the type of community shared by Luke is revived. Amen.

Reflection shared during CEDEPCA's weekly devotions by Esvin Sirin.