

Although they were written at different times and for different audiences, the readings are meant to encourage us. Although they can be rather harsh to the enlightened ear: Moses is given confidence to go and conquer a foreign land; Saint James addresses hypocrisy; and Jesus speaks of our inner demons, the substance of the readings is to be authentic and live out one's faith to the fullest!

All of us heard the word as it was proclaimed. Some of us may have listened! However, how many are going to "be doers" of what we heard? Faith in action is true faith. St. James tells us that "Faith without works is dead".

Israel was not a closed society. Rather, they welcomed the alien and provided for their needs. It was a sin to allow widows and orphans to be unsupported. They believed that by being hospitable, educated, worshipful and charitable they would be an example to other nations.

Catholicism is not a closed religion. We do not just "take care of ourselves". We are active in the world. By cultivating a culture of prayer, service, and love, we are an example to our neighbors.

The Catholic Service Appeal is the annual giving campaign of the Diocese of Jackson. There are many services the Diocese provides to our parishes, schools, and to the communities we live in. This includes support for educating seminarians, Catholic Charities, campus ministry, mission parishes and schools, youth ministry, formational ministries, priest retirement and clergy assistance, evangelizing and communications.

Our faith is built on parish ministry that includes the presence of a priest. The priest echoes the disciple with the "unwashed hands" who labors among the parishioners as a leader and servant. To bring more laborers to the harvest, we need to support our seminarians who are preparing to give their lives to Diocesan ministry. We also cannot forget the priests who labored mightily in the fields and now are in need for basic housing and amenities in retirement. We also must support the men and women who minister in parishes as catechists, pastoral administrators, and coordinators of parish life.

From this base, we build up our parishes with youth ministries. As our youth become college students, we offer serious faith opportunities in our key university parishes so the faith may grow and produce strong Catholics for the future and perhaps raise up vocations to ministry.

As always, Catholic Charities is a sign to all our wisdom and intelligence. We believe in supporting the immigrant, feeding the hungry, providing protection to the unborn and the newborn while developing healthy, holy societies in Mississippi. We believe the Church is more than worship, it is accompanying those who are lost on the margins of our communities. We seek the lost sheep and bring them home.

The readings may appear to be harsh, but the Word of God calls us into action. By your pledge to the Catholic Service Appeal, you are living and doing what Jesus calls you to do. Our world has enough delusion of goodness. We are truly called to sainthood by being "doers". We get our hands dirty by working for justice. We do by honoring God with our lips, hands and hearts.