

## Beyond the Plate

Recently on a flight from Dallas to Los Angeles, I sat by an African American person who lives in South Central LA near the corner of Florence and Normandie. Although Ray has had first hand experience with living through both of the large scale riots in Los Angeles, he himself is a gentle, soft-spoken person who is a deacon at his local church.

He was quite elated to find out that I was a pastor and we immediately launched into a conversation about the usually limited role the deacons played in a local church. I commented that Stephen, one of the first deacons, did far more than just “pick-up the offering” but was a powerful preacher and healer as well: “And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8).

We both agreed that I should preach a sermon sometime entitled “**Beyond the Plate**” which would give deacons and others a new vision of what God could do for and through them.

Whether you are a student, a homemaker, a secretary, a janitor or corporate executive, we are all confined at times by a limited view of what we can or should be doing. Life settles down to a rather marginal routine and we are often content to just barely function, to just do enough to get by, to just pass the plate.

I would encourage all of us to ask the Lord to lift up our eyes, to give us a new vision of the glorious opportunities that exist just beyond the mundane performance of the commonest of duties. May our meals turn into sacraments and our works turn into art. May our words be laced with kindness and may we make a real difference today in whatever we do.

May the Lord help us today to not just pass the plate . . . but to look beyond the plate.