

## Love is generous and absent self-serving praise

When we think of the 1950s, whether we were alive then or a member of a later generation that has heard only stories about this most wonderful time, there were some realities that were not so ideal. Simpler, yes, but otherwise not so much different from today. People hustled off to work or school, complained about this and that and enjoyed their lives as best they could. We grew up with the mantra: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” As a child we learned that love meant you liked someone a lot and sometimes we loved things like ice cream and bicycles. Far too often we never really gained a true understanding of loving someone as yourself, especially if you didn’t even know that person.

In elementary school our classes were small and there was quite a mixture of “rich” kids (they had TVs) and “poor kids” (lucky to have a radio). The first day of school in the fall, the teacher would give each student a list of books required for the rest of the year. Being the youngest in my family, I had to do with a lot of hand-me-downs so it was a real treat to get a new book of my own. Some kids were not so fortunate and had to borrow a book or use the teacher’s book after class.

The local schoolboard decided that they would buy extra copies of books for the students who couldn’t afford to buy their own—an act of love your neighbor. However, the board didn’t stop there. On the edges of the pages when the books were closed they stamped in large bold type, “Property of School District 13.” None of the board members meant to be mean-spirited but they certainly made it clear to everyone that they bought the books. Generous, but lacking the sensi-

tivity of compassionate stewards was their legacy at that time.

While that isolated incident in the 1950s doesn’t seem to be that big a violation of treating your neighbor as you would like to be treated, it is in a small way the perfect example of how we still interact with others. Our love and consequently our charity are generous acts that trigger the expectation of gratitude. If you simply open a door for a passerby or you provide the opportunity of a lifetime to someone, do it because you can, no strings attached, no indebtedness. This generosity is love. As a steward of love it is our duty to foster an environment of service

Pope Francis tells us that love “is the concrete service we give to each other. It is a humble service, done in silence and hiddenness, as Jesus himself said: ‘Don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.’”

Many have already made the service Pope Francis encourages a way of life, but when we experience the bitterness and vitriol in public discourse today, it frequently ends up in a shouting match with little regard for the truth. To be God’s steward and love one another, there must be respect, first for ourselves, and then the same respect for others—brown, black or white, rich or poor, philosophically left, right or somewhere in the middle. Only then can we be of service with a heart of real love and absent any self-serving praise.

Written by Ray Huss, a member of our Stewardship Committee

### EVERYDAY STEWARDSHIP

It will take too long. I can’t spare it. I don’t know anybody. I am just too busy. How many excuses can you think of to put forth as reasons why you should say no to the call of Jesus Christ? Wait. You didn’t know to whom those responses were directed? We say no to many things and many people, but we wouldn’t say no to Jesus. Really?

During this Lenten season, like all the other seasons, we will be asked to respond in many different ways. There will be fasting, almsgiving, and abstinence from certain foods. There will be invitations to various devotions and formational studies. We will be asked to reflect on our faith and then dive deeper.



The argument will be made by some that many of these things are being asked of us by others and not Jesus. Of course, that will just be another excuse like those above. For every calling upon us comes with a temptation to take the easy way out or to minimize the value of the request.

We will stay caught up in an endless cycle of excuses that lead us nowhere. That is unless we simply choose to stop the madness and say YES! This Lent, give up and give in. Let God take over as you surrender all you are and have to Him. Now is the time to turn to Jesus. No more excuses.

-Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS, Liturgical Publications