

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Mar 8th 2014

“If you bestow your bread on the hungry

and satisfy the afflicted;

Then light shall rise for you in the darkness,

and the gloom shall become for you like midday.” Isaiah 58:10

It’s pretty straight forward – help the poor, the hungry and those in need and you will have light.

While in high school a group of us spent several weeks in a poverty-stricken area of the US on a service trip. We stayed with a nun and lived in her house with her. We were running errands when Sister spotted a hitchhiker. My fears and objections didn’t come into play as the decision was made before I could voice my concerns about our safety. Somehow, probably through the Holy Spirit, Sister made everyone comfortable. All of us, led by Sister, started to get to know our passenger and his particular needs of that time. Sister’s great faith, that we were helping one person in a small way, came through her calm presence and her gentle probing of this young man. He simply needed a ride somewhere and since his destination wasn’t too far off of our path I became calmer and recognized Sister’s pure intentions and the young man’s simple needs.

After the hitchhiker was dropped to his destination, Sister explained how we must “know” the poor. In our discussion she explained how a person could be poor spiritually and/or materially. Many people are without food, clothes and the basics but, even more importantly, are alone and don’t know Jesus. She challenged us to try to always look to help someone in need, to be an example and to stretch the limits of our comfort zone. I don’t like to stretch the limits of my comfort zone. This is hard for me.

The service trip was an eye opening experience for me. I had never seen such poverty before. Some people didn’t have running water, others lived in very small places with little food and clothes and unemployment was high. Sister focused on getting to know them, being their friend and listening. She put herself in their shoes and did all things with love.

Within my role I am blessed to see staff, faculty and students helping those in need within the workplace. Some examples include: a department giving birthday and Christmas gifts to the facilities person who cleans the work area, sponsoring and coordinating Project Homeless Connect, offering

reflections and prayers before meetings and providing support (flexibility, financial and spiritual) during times of need to staff, faculty and students. Creighton is a community that cares and it shows every day.

I like Twitter and appreciate the messages that can be shared with so many people. I follow Pope Francis on twitter (@pontifex) and he had the following tweet in early January:

“Let us leave a spare place at our table: a place for those who lack the basics, who are alone.”

Praying and reflecting on how I can apply his twitter message has become a favorite prayer time practice. From this message, I have felt called to look for those that are alone and need some support.

Lord, teach me your ways. As we begin the early days of Lent, help me to slow down, open my eyes to the poor, and help those in need. Help me to stretch my comfort zone and to leave a spare place at our table.

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