

"To Lead an Apostolic Community, Under Authority, That Brings People to Jesus Christ."

Bishop's Note: February 18, 2016 Spiritual Disciplines - Secret Service

Last Wednesday, the faithful throughout the diocese gathered in our churches for the haunting and beautiful liturgy known as Ash Wednesday. In that service, the Gospel lesson was from Matthew chapter six and we read these words:

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:1-4)

One of the marks of a Christian is humility. The virtue of humility is not something that is valued much in our "Selfie" culture, where we are encouraged to document every aspect of our lives and share them with the world through social media. Perhaps my age is showing, but I don't understand the need for the world to know what I'm having for lunch. This kind of narcissism, which is lauded in society, runs counter to the Kingdom values of humility and secret service.

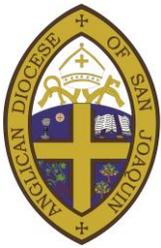
In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter six, Jesus expressly warns us that we are not to make people aware of our works of charity and love: “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others.”

This Lent we are looking at the Spiritual Disciplines in my Bishop's Note, and one of those disciplines is to serve others in secret. We are, indeed, to give to the needy and to love and care for others, but we are to do so quietly and in such a manner that we do not draw attention to ourselves. This may be as simple as sending an anonymous note to a brother or sister in church saying how much you admire them and appreciate their service in church. Or perhaps God is calling you to volunteer with the church or another organization for a couple of hours a week, but not to make a big deal out of it or draw attention to yourself.

I see this in the Cathedral where a group of people volunteer to work with the after school program of New Spirit Academy, which is a Charter School on the Cathedral campus. These brothers and sisters quietly share the Gospel with boys and girls who would not otherwise hear the Good News of Jesus Christ that week, and these volunteers do so quietly and humbly.

The real benefit of our service comes from the joy of serving and not from the accolades of others. St. Francis had it right in his prayer:

"Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to



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understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life." Amen.

I pray you all a very blessed Lent!

Bp. Eric