

"Whoever receives you, receives me...and whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink ...will not surely lose his reward"

Matthew 10:38 -42

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

An appeal from a Christian need, should never be written as coming from the writer. It must be directed as an appeal from Christ to help others. A response to the appeal should never be seen as just a response from the donor's routine giving. It must be directed as responding to a relationship with Christ that calls for helping others.

In our final effort to close out CSA (Catholic Service Appeal), I write down a story I used in my homily last week and a quote from the weekend's gospel. The story accents what our parish can do with the annual overage we generously receive. As is regularly noted, a parish going over the target (\$100,000 for us) receives the overage monies back. We are currently over the target by \$11,000, but recent years have always seen a \$20,000 over and from more people. We need to retain our supporters from the past and welcome new ones. The effort is for Christ, as noted above, and is an obligation of a pastor in promoting a widespread effort for Christ.

We have regularly noted the varied directions of where the overage monies are shared. RAINBOW FUND, run jointly with St. Vincent de Paul Society, is one of the beneficiaries. A RAINBOW story follows.

RICKY HENDRICKSON - The Face of Jesus Christ

The homeless travel through our minds as a group of defined people. No, they have individual names, relatives, life stories, brokenness, and 'places' they stay every night. Use your imagination. Ricky (his full name – no issue with him) lives somewhere, on the move, and about twice a year walks from downtown to Christ the King. We have gotten to know each other. He can show up when I am not here and he simply leans on the church door until I return. He has surprised me at the oddest times and with a new request.

He came by about two weeks ago and caught me in the evening with an initial selfish thought: "Not NOW". I move away from selfishness and listen on the porch as to where he has been lately. The need now is bus fare to Chicago. "Ricky, why Chicago – that is a long way?. His ID card has always shown KY. "I want to go see my brother". I say, "Let me call him". "No, my sister-in-law would not want to know I am coming". "Ricky, we are not going to foolishly spend money for you to go Chicago".

I change the subject and plan a distraction. We head into town and pull into a clean, but one of the cheapest motels in town. It costs for one week, less than some motels charge for one day. The motel is always helpful to me and very kind to Ricky. He is now prepared to experience a slice of heaven for five days: clean space, TV, and morning breakfast – loves the coffee. I think RAINBOW FUND check is properly spent.

I give him some spending money. Not really mine, but yours. We priests are very well compensated by you and you always slip unexpected money into our hands. Monies came directly to me just a few days after he left that more than covered his "bonus". It always works that way.

We stop at Goodwill for an update on his wardrobe. Regretfully, he never hangs onto much from the last shopping spree. But then where would he keep it? Carry it? He looked very sharp in that long lost cowboy hat he showed up wearing years back.

We keep in touch during the sacred week at the motel. He is always there when I stop at the motel – bed made, and nothing in frig that should not be there (he DEFINITELY does not drink, smoke, and he spends money wisely). We go out to McDonalds a few times and he orders carefully as his teeth are shot. “Father, I need to eat better...I am down to 94 pounds”. Yes, he needs to improve the diet as he barely makes a shadow at 5’6”. He did look better in that long lost tall cowboy hat.

The breaking down of a story as to its accuracy was one of my strengths of years back. I became a detective in determining the truth of the assistance request. The RAINBOW FUND and other charities has to do such diligence in respecting generosity of the supporters. Ricky is one that is far above most with no lies, maybe exaggerations in talking up his woes. I have come to realize though, that sometimes the needy do lie a bit about their circumstance to sustain their lifestyle. But then, there are some rich who are greedy to sustain their lifestyle. Which is the bigger sin?

He badly wants me to stop by the last night . And I know why. It is his last night under our care. He quickly brings up the trip to Chicago again. “I have a few friends there”. “\$65 – and two dollars would help me get to the bus station real early in the morning”.

What would you do? Likely the same as I did. On our behalf, I pushed the \$65 across the table and then some.

He repeatedly has reminded me that “...there is not another Church in Traverse City better for helping a guy”. I know he means it and I know it is somewhat the case. Thank you.

On behalf of Ricky and Christ, Thank you.

Fr. Ray Cotter

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This message will gently be sent this upcoming week to those who have not responded yet to CSA. Or, simply put your envelope into collection basket, marked accordingly. Thank you again for that consideration.

July 8, 2017