

## How Could I NOT Want to be a Part of That

“In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen”

When Fr Bill asked me to say a few words during the Stewardship campaign it made me pause and reflect on why I give. What keeps me coming back week after week? And why is Grace so important to my life? I began by taking a close look at how Grace is working in my life right now.

I am currently meeting with several others every other week to discuss important topics concerning our faith. And the last conversation we had, had us reflecting on “What is a Christian”? We spent a lot of time going through the Baptismal Covenant. We discussed our beliefs. What does that look like in our lives? In our discussion we reflected on Paul frequently comparing the church, (that would be you and I) to a single body which has different parts and different functions. The eye is not the hand, the hand is not the foot. But the body (our church) as a whole needs each part to be the best it can be. You have to take care of that body. So I guess I needed to go back to the beginning to see how well I am taking care of my body, my church.

When I came to Jefferson City in January 1985 I started attending Grace as soon as the move had settled down. The first parishioner I met was DJ Nash. For those of you that might not know DJ she was a dynamic person who did not know a stranger. I was made to feel at home and invited downstairs for coffee hour. I actually declined. It was just my first Sunday! But that encounter did encourage me to come back. By the time we got to the end of the school year I had volunteered to be a Sunday School teacher. DJ accepted my offer immediately which then set me up to meet even more parishioners.

I have been a Sunday school teacher for a good portion of my church life at Grace. I have taught younger children. Education was also my career choice so it was an easy fit. I have loved sitting down with the children of Grace to introduce a bible passage, an art project, or to do a Godly Play story. Godly Play was an amazing curriculum that allowed a storyteller to tell a story from the Bible. But that curriculum took a lot of advanced preparation. The amount of time that Sandy and Roger Weis and many others put into pulling together all of the different pieces needed for this program was humbling. While teaching those stories I can tell you that I sometimes learned right along with the kids. Their questions and comments helped me to remember that our children are our treasures. One time that sits in my heart was when I was

teaching a younger class. We were choosing our seats around the table and this student grabbed the chair and pulled it right next to me. So I turned and welcomed this student to the table. And this child looked up at me and said "Do you know why I sat here? Because you are just like family" **Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these"** How can I NOT want to be a part of that?

Along with embarking on my Sunday School career I also began singing in the choir. Dr. Robert Mitchell was the director and his wonderful wife Charlene, another dedicated alto, was there every week. The music that he chose was sometimes very challenging for a novice such as I. But he was always cognizant of this and would offer to make cassette tapes with our parts on it so we could take them home and practice. I would always come back on Sunday feeling a little more confident. After Mr Mitchell retired we were so fortunate for Karel Lowery to agree to be our director. She continues to be patient and encouraging after all these years. Beth and Karel are a dynamic duo that graces us with wonderful music every week. We have a choir that is small but mighty. Many strong voices in each part. We all meet every Wednesday evening for practice. We give what we have to learn our music. And my favorite place during choir is in the back row with the infamous altos. We share the dread of high Es. But we also tend to share giggles and such that make our practices even more fun. Laughter and friendship and music. **"Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises"** How can I NOT want to be a part of that?

Another opportunity that I was offered was during our time with our Interim priest, Joan Yetter. She had asked if I would like to train the acolytes. After listening to the responsibilities and examples she gave about the task at hand I agreed. If any of you have had the good fortune to be able to work with the acolytes you know how fulfilling it is. The first few times that a young person serves, either as a torchbearer or a crucifer, you can just feel the trepidation in their soul. Everyone will be watching. What if I forget to do something? What if I make a mistake. And each time I would assure them that when they are serving God in His church, there are no mistakes. After a few services you can see the confidence rise and they own that position. One such time was a female student that wanted to try to be a crucifer. Now, if any of you have ever tried to carry the cross that we use down the aisle I can tell you that is no easy task. It is heavy. And you have to have your hands in the right position so that you can hold it up and make sure it is straight. Well she was willing to give it a try. The rest of the responsibilities of a crucifer did not

bother her. But successfully carrying the cross down the aisle did. She tried several times during our first practice. It was indeed a bit heavy for her but not anything she couldn't overcome. After a few services that she served as crucifier that cross was high and straight and she carried it with as much reverence as any other crucifer before her. I was so in awe of her perseverance and willingness to keep trying. "For nothing will be impossible with God" How can I NOT want to be a part of that?

So, this is why I give. I have been given the opportunity to serve according to my gifts and To belong to a church family with so many other talents and skills.. I have had the opportunity to volunteer and serve with some energizing parishioners. Everyone of our stories is different. We come to church with our own relationship with God. We bring our strengths. Our strengths that we have are not ours, but God's gift to us. And together we are Christians that act on our faith using these gifts. We are charged with taking care of this body, our church. For each of us that looks a little different. We must all reflect on what we can offer. We need to consider our time, our talent, our treasures. We should look at each gift God has given us to share. This may be sharing your voice in choir, your mechanical expertise at keeping our beautiful church beautiful, or teaching those little treasures in Sunday School. But it is important to also consider your financial treasure as well. This is truly an individual consideration. And one that needs to be addressed as well. It is important that our faith guides us to continue to care for our body, our church. "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly, or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" How can **WE** NOT want to be a part of that?

??Amen.