

When I was growing up, the four of us kids had regular chores to do around the house. We had daily chores such as washing and drying the dishes. We were in two teams of two – one would wash, the other dry, every other night. But we also had Saturday chores. Dad and Mom would make up a list of what needed to be done, then we kids rolled dice to see who would pick what chores. Highest number got to choose first and so on down the line. There was the usual grumbling, but we were a more or less docile work force.

But as I grew older and spoke with other kids, I learned they got “allowances.” What? I never knew there was such a thing. But I discovered my friends got \$5 – 10\$ a week! For doing their chores! We periodically mentioned this to Dad. You know what he said? After 50 years, I’m paraphrasing, but it was basically, “Why should you get paid for doing your share to keep the family going? We all pitch in. That’s not a job. That’s loving each other.” I still envied my friends’ riches, but I couldn’t really argue the point.

“When you have done all you have been commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.’” Jesus can sound mean or unappreciative here. There are other places in the Gospels where Jesus stresses the beauty of serving – His washing of His Disciples feet at the Last Supper, for example. But here Jesus wants to make a different point. We are obligated to serve Him and our brothers and sisters. That service doesn’t make us saints. It just makes us faithful Disciples.

At one of my previous parishes there was a non-denominational Christian on staff. She once mentioned she found it a little strange that at our Catholic parish so many people were paid to do ministry that at her church were done by volunteers. Now, I’m not knocking lay ministry – and none of the staff’s jobs are in danger. But she made an interesting point. Do we in typical Catholic parishes now assume that if a job needs doing, we must pay someone to do it? Part of the issue, I suspect, is that the parishes

are so big, it's easy to assume someone else will do it. But they often don't. The parish needs your help. But all of us disciples also need to serve – for our own sakes as much as for the parish.

This week is the Ministry Fair weekend at Sacred Heart. Out in the narthex after mass you will find representatives from the various ministries at Sacred Heart at the tables ready to sign you up. Now I'm in the role my Father used to play in our family chore sessions, I am your spiritual Father with the list of what needs to get done in our spiritual home. And as my Dad said, these opportunities aren't really chores. To volunteer and serve at the parish is one of the best ways to grow in a relationship with God.

For example, one of the things we really need are volunteers for our Middle School Youth group and Confirmation programs. They will have a hard time operating this year without more help. But volunteering for this ministry is also a way for you to grow in faith.

The paradox of the Gospel is that the more we share and give away – for instance with middle school kids -- the more we receive back.

Or take the ministers at weekend masses. At almost every mass we're scrambling to find ministers to lector, distribute the Eucharist, to usher. I brought the cup back a year ago or so – but at many masses there is no Precious Blood of Christ offered because there is nobody to distribute Him.

And I could go on. But my point is that giving of our time is a gift we give not just to the parish, but it is a blessing for ourselves – not always easy, but a good thing to spend our lives upon. I'm asking you to volunteer for at least one ministry for one year. These ministries are done for Jesus and our brothers and sisters – not for pay, but out of charity towards one another, that our parish family might flourish.

[I would not like to introduce X who will give a witness for how ministry has blessed his/her life.]