

Parish Stewardship Update

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Kitchen of Real Life!

Preparing the Way for Christ

Reflection by Fr. Brendan McGuire

Last week I was fascinated watching the food channel on television which shows real chefs cooking different foods in different ways. They always make it look so easy. Actually it looks *too* easy! When they say, “you need to cut the carrots in diamond shapes” and then they produce a bowl full of cut carrots from under the counter. Or when they say, “just put that in the oven for 40 minutes and don’t forget to brown the meat.” Then they produce the dish from another oven, already done! They make it look so easy. It never seems that way for me!

Last week Oliver from Oliver’s Twist did a different type of show. He took some “want-to-be chefs” and showed them what it was like in a real restaurant kitchen. They trained in the “TV” kitchen and then they were ready for the “real” kitchen. As we watched with hidden cameras, it was more like my kitchen. There was bedlam! The frying pans were going everywhere and so too was the food. The tempers rose to new heights and it looked more like a real live kitchen to me.

At one point Oliver was trying to get two steak filets for some customers but only one was ready. Oliver asked the chef where the other one was.

“It is not ready yet.”

“Oh, so what do you want me to tell the customer? Here is your steak but the lady will have to wait till we have hers ready!” Oliver quips.

“No, don’t tell the customer that. I dropped the other steak,” said the struggling chef.

“Great!” said Oliver, “I’ll just tell them you dropped the steak and we’ll have another one for you as soon as we pick it up from the floor.”

“Tell them whatever you want to, I am leaving.”

“Great, that’s great!” answered Oliver, “I will tell them that the chef needs a little break.” At which point the struggling chef stormed out of the kitchen.

Then Oliver stopped everyone in the kitchen and asked all of them to come into the restaurant to meet the customers. They walked out to the restaurant to find it empty. It was another fake stage! Oliver said, “Now some of you are angry at me because you believe I was mean or deceitful since

there were no customers. Instead you should be relieved that there were no customers. If there had been they would be very unhappy. You ought to be glad that you have another chance to learn and get your act together for the real kitchen.”

Every year we approach Christmas by setting aside four weeks to prepare for Christ in a different way. We acknowledge that He came once in history and that He is with us now but we also expect him to come again. So, we go through this season of Advent and prepare radically for the Lord’s coming. Sometimes we would rather He actually come again in the dramatic way described in the gospel where the sky, the moon and the stars show extraordinary signs that His coming is imminent. However, this gospel language is apocalyptic, and as such is meant to encourage us to try harder to live this Christian life.

In the same way that Oliver, in his TV show, was training chefs for the “real kitchen” and used an exercise to sharpen their skills, we too need to train ourselves for the “real world” and use the four weeks of Advent to sharpen our skills. We come together each Sunday in Church to learn how to be better chefs in the real “kitchen of life.” Anyone who cooks for guests knows how much hard work it entails. Similarly anyone who tries to live a Christian life knows how much hard work it is too! We need all the tips and all the hints we can get.

When we approach Christmas this year and Christ does not arrive on the clouds from on high we ought not to get disappointed but be thankful that we have another chance to get our act together in our kitchens of life. If the Master Chef Christ asks us what to tell our customers who are homeless or hungry; our customers who are sick or in prison; our customers who are in need of friendship or a listening ear; we better have a good answer. Do we want Christ to tell our customers and God that “we are too busy this time of year, maybe we can help later in the year when we have more money, time or will.” Let us take these four weeks of Advent and prepare more radically for the coming of the Lord and practice more fully the Christian life in the kitchens of our lives.

What do you want Christ to tell the customers?

Good Stewardship ...

There are several ministries and parishes in the Diocese of Rockford that work directly with the poor, the homeless, and low-income families or individuals, and which promote Catholic life and moral teachings. It seems appropriate during this season of gift-giving, to help those for whom Jesus has a special place in his heart.

Please contact one or more of the following organizations in the Rockford Diocese and offer your time, skills or money as a way of showing your concern and faithful solidarity with them.

Archbishop Romero School

312 N. High Street

Aurora, IL 60505

(630) 898-8690

Inner-city school with an adopt-a-student program for families needing tuition assistance

SS. Peter & Paul Parish

617 Lincoln Ave

Rockford, IL 61102

(815) 962-7171

Inner-city parish with a high percentage of low-income families

Sacred Heart Parish

771 Fulton Street

Aurora, IL 60505

(630) 898-4165

Faith-filled community near St. Nicholas Parish and Archbishop Romero School that serves a high percentage of low-income families

In The Spirit Of Giving...

St. Patrick Parish

2505 School Street

Rockford, IL 61101

(815) 965-9539

Serving the community on the west side of Rockford with a clothing closet, food pantry, and anti-violence initiatives

St. Elizabeth Catholic Community Center

1536 S. Main Street

Rockford, IL 61102

(815) 969-6526

Inner-city ministry providing soup kitchen, food pantry, senior services and counseling to low-income people in southwest Rockford

Catholic Charities

Provides a variety of social services including: foster care, counseling, difficult pregnancy and adoption services, advocacy and outreach to the frail, elderly, physician referral for Medicaid clients, emergency and outreach services. Area offices are located in:

Aurora (630) 820-3220

Belvidere (815) 544-9092

DeKalb (815) 756-8632

Elgin (847) 742-4525

Freeport (815) 235-9563

JoDaviess

County (815) 777-1048

McHenry County (815) 344-6956

Rockford (815) 965-0623

Sterling (815) 625-6945

Immigration and Refugee

Services

300 N. Alpine Road

Rockford, IL 61107

(815) 399-1709

Parish Emergency Assistance Network

1505 S. Main Street

Rockford, IL 61102

(815) 962-7020

You might ask about stewardship

How much do I have to give?

I ask from a stewards perspective

How much do I want to give?

Think about it!