

## Be Generous

"The Bible has lots of great examples of how generous God is to us, not least in giving His only son, Jesus to take the weight of our sins on the cross, freely and undeservedly. We truly serve a generous God who welcomes us back to him with open arms and rejoicing when we return home like the prodigal son.

Generosity is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, says Paul to the Galatians.

Two passages really stick out from scripture when we are looking for guidance on our human generosity. In Acts 20:34- 35, Paul is speaking to the Ephesian elders and says: "You know for yourselves, that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions. In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The Old Testament book of Sirach goes further (Sir 35:10-12): "Be generous when you worship the Lord and do not stint the first fruits of your hands. With every gift show a cheerful face, and dedicate your tithe with gladness. Give to the Most High as he has given to you, and as generously as you can afford".

One of the ways I saw this generosity acted out was when I was a teenager. Every Sunday afternoon, a group of 20 or so young people would meet (known as an SVP group) and say the Vincentian prayer together: "Lord Jesus, help us through meeting together to deepen our Vincentian friendship and answer the call every Christian receives to seek and find those who are forgotten and to help bring your love to those who are suffering or deprived. Help us to be generous with our time, our possessions and ourselves, so that we may grow perfect in your love and learn to share your Sacrifice for others in the Holy Eucharist".

We would then ask each other if there were any other prayer requests people had before going off to the local residential old people's homes to spend time with the residents- getting to know them week by week, sharing stories across the generation gap, and providing them with company and a smiling face for a couple of hours every week. It really was a privilege to become the highlight of a lonely person's week, and to know that we were doing a little bit to bring some light into their lives, and it didn't stop there. We decided to form a group with young people from other churches, and together we would go into the community to serve in very practical ways, such as gardening for a sick parishioner, or helping them clean their home.

Looking back, it was a great experience to know what it was to deliberately and regularly put aside time and energy that would have been spent on ourselves, for other people in need of our God- inspired generosity. By being generous also meant that we were able to experience the generosity of God through the blessings we received.

When discerning it is good to have this same discipline of setting aside time, being generous to God with it, so that we can listen to him about where he is calling us and what he is calling us to.

The example of SVP is one of a more structured generosity, but I think it's really important not to neglect the many opportunities that arise every day to be generous in perhaps a smaller, more individual, or less 'corporate' way, be it making someone a cup of tea, or offering to run an errand. It doesn't take much, sometimes just a smile at someone on the street or stopping to chat a little while unexpectedly is enough, but it really does feel good, and you never know- you could make someone's day!"

*- Olivia Rzadkiewicz, Young Adult, Gerrards Cross*