

A SOCIAL JUSTICE REFLECTION: CHARITY: MORE THAN CLEANING OUT THE CLOSET



If you haven't worn it in the past 12 months, then it's time to get rid of it.

That's the advice when deciding which clothes in your closet to keep and which to give away.

Charity is not cleaning out your closet to find the more-than-twelve-months-since-you've-worn-it clothes to give away. Charity is not collecting stuff. Then donating the 'stuff' to an organization which collects stuff to give away to the poor and vulnerable, the hungry and the needy.

Charity extends far beyond benevolent giving. At the heart of charity are relationships; our most important relationship is the one we have with God. Therefore, charity is to love God with all your heart, soul and mind, and as it naturally follows, to love your neighbor as yourself.

Living in relationship with God naturally leads one to "live by the rules" – especially the rule of charity. Living by the rules *period* is not the point; the intent is to *love* God by building His kingdom of heaven here on earth (charity). God's rules provide the necessary guidance.

In today's Gospel, a man asks what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus's first response is to follow the commandments – God's rules providing the guidance necessary for living. Imagine the man taking out his imaginary checklist, marking off each commandment and, having marked off the tenth and final commandment, writing "COMPLETE" across the page.

Living in relationship with God must be total, complete, and must evolve to living in a *loving* relationship with God.

This man's possessions were preventing him from achieving a total and complete relationship with God. Actually, it was the man's *attachment* to his possessions that provided the obstacle.

How often is our contribution to our relationship with God nothing more than the clothes we choose to discard after they've hung unworn for the past 12 months? How often do we let our favorite sweater of desire come between us and God?

Charity is more than giving away the stuff you no longer need. Charity is the love which brings us to God. The first reading from Wisdom tells us how:

"I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I ... deemed riches nothing in comparison with her.... [A]ll good things together came to me in her company..."

(Sunday Readings for October 11, 2015)



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