



WEEK 2: THEY GIVE ALL THEY HAVE: YOUNG ADULTS CALLED TO SERVE

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(A FOUR-WEEK ADVENT REFLECTION SERIES)

Throughout the university setting there are young adults moving from classroom to classroom. We see them walking toward the coffee house on campus and we see them as they make their way towards the library to study for finals. What we don't often see is their desire to journey with God; but that desire is there and manifested in many ways. Quite often we hear of the many young adults who are leaving the church or walking away from their faith because it gives us something to talk about. Who, after all, talks about those who remain in their faith and close to God. If Jesus was sitting in this university, he might take me aside and have me observe a young person stopping by the chapel or making the sign of the cross in the same way he called the disciples to observe the poor widow placing her two small coins in the temple treasury. No one noticed her, because her actions were not blatantly on display as some others might have been. She gave, made no fuss, and that was her worship. This is true for young adults around the world. They might not make a big show of their faith all the time but if we observe it we will see it. We don't notice, but Jesus wants us to notice.

Young adults have a desire to serve God and this service does not always take the form of big "service" events such as rehabbing a house. They serve God through prayer, they serve others through prayer and they give what they have; spare time. The big rattle of the coin dropped in the treasury makes more noise true, but does it have more value? This is a question that young adults struggle with because they do not have the financial resources to give as they observe others do. We need to help them realize that their prayer does have value and it is indeed service. If they don't realize the value, then they might lose the desire.

As children of God we are called to serve in ways that we are able, and we also encourage young adults to discern other ways their gifts and talents can be of use to others. This can take on the form of direct contact with people who need to be shown God's love through the actions of others. As a chaplain in the university I encourage service projects but not simply for the sake of service. Galatians 5:13 instructs us not to be self-focused on our own flesh but rather, "serve one another through love." This is the proper context of service; through love, and love must come from within. Is all service an act of love or is it something obligatory? When we love others, we want to give as an expression of that love not because we must give.



This Advent discover what you love and who you care about. Within that discovery might be the type of service you are called to carry out. Love to build? Build a house. Love to cook? Cook a meal. Love to organize? Sort clothes at the shelter. Love to talk? Keep company with the infirmed or homeless. Love to pray? Pray for the world. Each one of these actions bring light into the world just as each one of these actions makes Jesus present to others.

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