

## HOW WILL YOU USE YOUR GIFTS THIS LENT?

### A Reflection from the Ministers of Care

Members of our parish have followed a stewardship model of ministry for years: this reality needs to be acknowledged and celebrated. Many are dedicated, devoted, Christ-centered people who faithfully do our ministry of evangelization. Let us look at the gifts of the Spirit that God bestows on each of us and discern how we can utilize these gifts most effectively. In doing so, we can determine the extent to which we “evangelize” ... that is, preach the Gospel by the way we live and “hear the word of God, and do it.” (Mark 3:35).

In St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians (5:22-23), he explains: The fruit of the Spirit is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” If we were to meditate on each of these virtues, to the extent of our relationship with God, which have we been given and how are we applying them?

**Love** – God’s fruit of love gives itself away with a pure motive and most generously. Just think of the major impact we could make in the world that is hungry for love if we really became the people of Jesus and begin to love like Him.

**Joy** – God’s fruit of joy is pure, a calm delight, gladness multiplied greatly. Look at the joy-filled lifestyle of Christ. Where did His joy come from? What were the principles by which he lived? The major obstacle to joy is worry. Imagine how we could influence others if our lives were one of prayerful gratitude and thankfulness.

**Peace** – God’s fruit of peace comes when we embrace the truth of being made right with God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God’s Son. We can be peacemakers when we actively pray that our paths in life are guided onto the path of God’s peace and we sow this into the lives of others with whom we work and play and shop.

**Patience** – God’s fruit of patience is the guardian of faith, the preserver of peace, the cherisher of love, the teacher of humility. It is the character virtue that enables all the others to develop and mature. Lack of patience can poison relationships and too often ruins what would otherwise be wonderful and maybe even brilliant personalities. Envision our daily interactions in a world that is infused with patience.

**Kindness** – God’s fruit of kindness manifests itself when we live with moral excellence of character and demeanor. When we nurture and grow kindness within us, we treat everyone as we have been treated by the Godhead – with sympathy, benevolence, and generosity. Timing is everything in being kind to others.

**Goodness** – God’s fruit of goodness is love in action. As committed Christians, we must every day and in every way seek to conform to the perfect image of Jesus ... getting to know Him and becoming like Him. Growing in goodness is not a once-for-all kind of experience.

**Trustfulness** – God’s fruit of trustfulness is faithfulness ... being able to be counted on at all times. Our Lord is trustworthy. He does not change due to age; He does not change as to place; He does not change as to His Word. When we learn to the little things with consistency, steadfastness, and faithfulness, we learn how to be trustful in all things.

**Gentleness** – God’s fruit of gentleness is not weakness but, rather, a way of living that has been energized by the Word of God. It is the state of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. As St. Francis De Sales said, “Nothing is so strong as gentleness; nothing so gentle as real strength.”

**Self-Control** -- God’s fruit of self-control is power and strength ... a great force within but under control. It has been said that this virtue is the glue which holds all of life and all of the harvest of the fruit of the Spirit. It is the discipline by which a productive Christian life matures.

This Lent, let us all strive to apply and live out the gifts that God has given us and reflect on how we fall short, that we become light in the darkness ... in our homes, our neighborhoods, our workplace, and in the world.

- Can we help create items for Bazaar 2017?
- Can we help with the ministries of the Ministers of Care?
- Can we take at least 10 Minutes to meditate each day?
- Can we study the Bible alone or with others?
- Can we volunteer as ministers at Mass?
- Fast from food or drink that have become a problem for us?

Success is not based on where you start, it’s where you finish. The joy is in the journey!

This week we focused on the gifts we have received and can receive. Next week, we will focus on our weaknesses because we are human beings who are sinful as well as good.