

# YEAR OF FAITH

## HABIT 3: REACH OUT TO HELP A NEIGHBOR IN NEED

### DECEMBER 2012

We have all heard the story of Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth to be with her during her pregnancy (Luke 1:39-56). She came to offer her assistance and companionship in what must have been a difficult time for the older, expectant mother. Scripture tells us Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months.

We have also heard the story of Jesus going to the home of Mary and Martha to be with them after the death of their brother Lazarus (John 11:1-44). It is in this story that we glimpse the divinity of Jesus being overcome by his humanity. In feeling the pain of Mary and Martha's loss, and his own, St. John tells us in 11:35; "Jesus began to weep..."

Scripture is filled with stories of caring, concerned individuals that take time from their lives to be with someone who is suffering or in need of a friendly visit. In John 13:34 we have the words of Jesus telling us; "I give you a new commandment: Love one another. Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other."

**The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults** (page 118) says; "God's people share in Christ's kingly mission, which is to lead others through loving service to them... We are called to a life of service."

This month for our Year of Faith journey we look at Habit 3:

### **"Reach Out to Help a Neighbor in Need."**

How often do we "Reach Out" to help someone else...probably more often than you realize.

- Every time you walk or run a marathon to find a cure for disease... you are reaching out.
- Every time you hold the door open for an elderly or disabled person... you are reaching out.
- Every time you volunteer to help with a funeral dinner or homeless meal... you are reaching out.
- Every time you say a prayer for victims of violence, abortion, or war... you are reaching out.
- Every time you call or write someone going through a hard time... you are reaching out.
- Every time you visit a nursing home, hospital, or homebound friend... you are reaching out.

This list could go on and on, but the point is that many times we already reach out to help others.

One of the ways we can mark this Year of Faith might be to make ourselves more aware of the many ways in which we can lift the spirits and lighten the load of others. How can we become more sensitive and responsive to our neighbors that are struggling?

Many years ago for my birthday, I was given a painted stone from my sister. The stone was taken from the wreckage of the destroyed milk house on the farm where I grew up. Painted on it were pictures of butterflies and flowers... and the words;  
**“The Way to a Brothers House Is Never Far.”**

Perhaps for the Year of Faith we could rephrase that to say;  
**“The Way to the Side of Someone In Need Is Never Far.”**

That attitude of brotherly love has been alive and well for over 95 years in a place dedicated to helping many young people find their way in life.

In Douglas County, Nebraska, just outside of Omaha, there is a place called Boys Town. It was founded in 1917 for disadvantaged and delinquent boys by Father Edward J. Flanagan, an Irish immigrant priest. (<http://www.boystown.org/nebraska-iowa>)

Today Boys Town has expanded to several states and is dedicated to the care, treatment, and education of at-risk boys and girls. These services and programs touch the lives of more than 150,000 children and families each year.

Near the gate of the Boys Town campus is a statue of a young boy carrying his younger brother on his back. The caption under the statue reads; **“He ain’t heavy Father, he’s my brother.”**

Those words and that statue depict the heart and soul of what **“Reach Out to Help a Neighbor in Need”** means. It’s not just giving a **“Hand Out”** when that is needed; many times it’s about giving a **“Hand Up”** with a smile, a gesture, an encouraging word, or the gift of our time. There are as many ways to **“Reach Out”** as there are people to do the reaching. It is something that every one of us can do.

Today we may be blessed enough to be the one that is able to reach out to, or carry, our brother or sister.

Tomorrow it may be us that need to be carried or reached out to.

Deacon Rich



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