

Have you ever been in a project to help someone else and it really went well? You know, like that TV program: home makeover.

Well I did recently.

As most of you know, our parish has been a main mover in cleaning our 80 acre park behind us. Two Saturdays ago we held the big clean up days

- **102 volunteers came to fill up those four dumpsters to the brim with debris in the park**
 - **Three GM retirees and 10 Henry Ford High School interns**
 - **Five other Henry Ford youth in a special program called Youth Voice with their director from the Tubman Center**
 - **20 fraternity brothers from the **Pi Kappa Alpha** at Wayne State**
 - **25 members of Corpus Christi Parish**
 - **42 people from the surrounding neighborhoods, a number of them coming out of their homes to join when they saw others working in the park.**
- **Officials from Wayne County donated, delivered and picked up 4 large dumpsters.**

- A man who runs, Motor City Grounds Crew, a non profit group, cut grass in ten acres of the park.
- Foodland on 8 Mile was donating hot dogs, chips and drink.
- Tim Horton's at 7 and Evergreen donated hot coffee and treats.
- State Representative Cavanagh office donated \$100 to cover the cost.
- The Sisters of Charity Foundation donated \$5,000 to help cut grass and have a celebration event later this summer.

The volunteers worked hard from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. You could sense the joy and celebration among the volunteers who worked diligently to fill the four large dumpsters to capacity.

Yes, it is a good feeling to do a good deed for others, to reach beyond our own self interests, and to bring healing and reconciliation into our world.

Well, that's just how Jesus and his disciples felt in today's gospel. Jesus had been preaching good news of God's forgiveness and reconciliation, healing the sick and expelling demons. Crowds had followed him, celebrated his presence ... and practically worn out him and his disciples. So they went off by themselves to get a little R & R.

That's where today's gospel begins. It says that "When Jesus was praying alone, with only his disciples near him". He had gone off to reflect on all that had been happening. Well this week I have taken a little time to sit back as Jesus did and reflect on what has been happening in my life and in the community. We need to take a little time. In fact, one of the greatest blocks to our spiritual growth in America is the fast pace we live. When did you last take quality time to talk with God one on one about how things are going?

Well, that is what Jesus did and when he had finished he put a question to his disciples...and whenever we hear "his disciples" in scripture, he is meaning, US. He asks them, "Who do people say that I am? They had heard his powerful preaching that the Kingdom of God was breaking through into history; they had seen his miracles and how he had expelled demons. It reminded some of them of the great prophets, of Elijah and to Peter, he saw Jesus as the Messiah come to set God's people free from the Roman government.

But Jesus, because of his deep prayer and union with his Father, saw even more deeply into what was happening. While not denying that he was the Messiah, he said that he would have to undergo great

suffering, be rejected by the religious leaders, and be killed, and then rise from the dead.

And then he said, if anyone wants to follow me, You must deny yourself, take up your cross DAILY and follow me. For those who want to save their lives will lose them, but those who lose their lives for my sake will save it.” I am not sure that is not the words the disciples wanted to hear... and I am not sure they play well on our ears either.

This week over 300 Catholic youth will spend a week in a very special retreat, It is called the Catholic Youth Camp. They will use Our Lady Sorrows in Farmington as their base of operations and during the days spread throughout the City of Detroit and volunteer their services to the community. Twenty of them will come to Corpus Christi tomorrow (Monday) morning and continue the clean up work on the park and clearing ten piles of debris in the square mile neighborhood.

For this week they will forego the normal summer activities teens usually see a valuable, going to parties, traveling out to beaches, making money for college. They will sleep on the floors of classrooms, take showers at the local high school and have whatever food that is provided. Their personal and social needs will not be met very well.

Yet I assure you that once they experience doing the volunteer work and sharing in the evenings of prayer at the camp, they will leave very tired but on a spiritual high. In fact, their main problem in the coming weeks will not be working on their complexions or reconnecting with their friends, but trying to recapture the highs they get by generously sharing their lives with others.

For just like Jesus warns his disciples in today's gospel, once you have experienced his way of loving and praying, once you have drawn close to the Father in prayer, once you fellowship with others who share a common vision, it is VERY difficult to go back to a world focused only of the promotion of "what is in it for me". Many of their family and friends just won't understand. If they stay faithful to their commitment to their service of others in the name of a loving God, they will face great challenges and suffering.

My brothers and sisters, is that not why we form faith communities...so that hopefully we can bond with others who have experienced the good news of forgiveness and healing and have committed ourselves....even in the midst of a very self serving world....to live differently?

We believe that the Kingdom of God is breaking through. And so whether it's

- picking up trash in a park or**
- changing a diaper, or**
- sending a get well card, or**
- visiting someone in the hospital,**
- or signing a petition to support efforts for the unborn or the homeless or the immigrant**

Jesus says we can expect two responses, first, a tremendous joy which we can only experience by entering into the work of God in our world. And second, we can expect the challenge of carrying a cross of rejection and persecution each day from those who do not share and are threatened by our way of life.

Yet I would make a large wager that once you experiences the healing touch of the Lord, once you participate in a generous outpouring of volunteer service in his name, once you reflect and feast on that spiritual high, you will find no other wine which will bring you more joy.