

In the past few weeks I have been writing about our parish vision. Parish leaders created this vision to give our parish a common direction, to guide our decision-making, and to help focus our priorities so we can use our resources well. Our vision has one key word, and four bullet points. In the past few weeks I've presented three bullet points: Love God; Grow Disciples; Share the Gospel.

Our last bullet point is: **Serve the World**. When Jesus told a parable about the final judgment, he did not mention the Ten Commandments. What he said was that those who took care of the hungry and thirsty, those who welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked, those who spent time with the sick and the imprisoned – those people would inherit the kingdom and eternal life. (Matthew, Chapter 25)

I think our parish knows this one and does it well. The world is a big place, and we know there are lots of needs. Jesus has called us to stretch ourselves beyond our own desires and the needs of our immediate circle of family and friends. They're a nice place to start but not where we end. We also have to stretch ourselves beyond our parish boundaries into the local community.

There are lots of opportunities, whether you like to spend time with people, or do things with your hands. We reach out to people in senior residences, and people in jail. We host 12-step groups for people recovering from various addiction. We have blood drives, and build houses. We offer ministry to migrant farmworkers, conduct food drives, and fill the giving tree. We serve Meals on Wheels and bring food to people recovering from health issues. We read and tutor in schools and at Peace House.

We also stretch farther through our special for people suffering from natural disasters and congoing poverty, for the Church that is growing in Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa, for support of the ministry of the Pope, and care for the people and places of the Holy Land.

Parishioners serve through their involvement in the Knights of Columbus, the St. Vincent DePaul Society, and Women of the Word. Many more parishioners serve throughout the community as members of charitable organizations, participation in schools and government, and promoting Christian values by their involvement in political life. Our arms are stretched out to the world when we support Fr. Peter Gregor's ministry in Honduras, our sister parish in El Salvador, and Catholic ministries in Mexico and Kenya.

I am reminded that Serving the World does not always mean giving money, though. Serving the world means using our time and our bodies and our skills to serve people. I am reminded of a question when I was asked about going to El Salvador, and whether it would be better just to send the money? The response was, "What would your grandmother say if she were asked whether she would like you to visit her, or prefer you just the send the money you would have spent on airfare?"

So the fourth part of our vision is to **Serve the World**. We use our precious resources of money; time; and blood, sweat, and tears to bring the hands and feet and face of Jesus to people in need.

Jesus said, "What you did to my brothers and sisters, even the least ones -- you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)