REACH INTO YOURSELVES. AND THEN REACH AGAIN. GIVE. AND THEN GIVE AGAIN.

As I begin the process of writing the SVdP Christmas Appeal, my heart is heavy. I do this on a day when new Covid-19 cases are being reported in the U.S. at over 200,000 a day, and the death toll exceeds 300,000. Oregon continues on a daily basis to surpass case and death record numbers.

My heart is heavy for another reason. I am reaching out to all of you at a time when many of you may be impacted by the pandemic, either directly or indirectly. You may have experienced the loss of a loved one or a co-worker. You may be stretched to the limit balancing home schooling young children while maintaining your employment. You may have been impacted by job loss or interruption. Asking people to give of themselves financially is by nature a difficult calling. Asking people to give under these circumstances cuts me to the core.

And yet. And yet I must ask. I must ask you to do what God asked of all of us. I must ask you to love your neighbors as yourselves. I must ask that from wherever you are at this moment, you reach. You reach further and deeper, into that well of empathy we are mandated by Christ to have to help those who are suffering. Suffering emotionally. Suffering physically. And most of all, suffering financially. Struggling, amidst a deadly pandemic, to stay housed, with their power on to stay warm and with food in the fridge.

SVdP is blessed with a group of donors for whom the word “generous” does no justice. The outpouring of support we’ve received since March is humbling. It’s truly extraordinary. And yet. Just as I am asking you to answer the call of empathy, I am asking you to give again as we enter the third wave of this scourge; the third wave of economic insecurity that most of us reading this appeal are unable to imagine.

There is an economic concept of “relative wealth” which I believe answers this call to empathy and allows us to view differently the decision to give charitably when our own circumstances may seem perilous. When people consider their own financial well-being, they generally compare their current income with their income earned in recent years. Through that lens, accessing empathy, and continuing to give, may truly feel prohibitive.

But even if your income or wealth has declined as the result of the pandemic, it is likely still significantly healthier than those whose option to literally keep their family housed, during a pandemic and going into the holiday season, is to seek assistance from an organization like SVdP. Acknowledging this concept in a very tangible way, the Royal Australian Mint is releasing a “Donation Dollar” coin. The coin is legal tender but is deigned to be given to charitable causes and to remind people of their relative wealth. A reminder, if you will, that they can indeed reach.

So, although we do not have a “Donation Dollar,” we do have two very powerful reminders of our relative wealth. The first is our ability to read or watch the news and grapple daily with a level of human suffering that most of us have never witnessed. The second is our call, directly from Christ, to help, to lift out of, and to love. We have the power of empathy.

So, entering this holiday season, what I ask of you is at once so difficult but also fundamentally simple: Reach into yourselves. And then reach again. Give. And then give again. Thank you.

In Christ, Brian Ferschweiler/Executive Director/503-234-5287/www.svdppdx.org
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