

An example of giving — with no strings attached



MORAL PERSPECTIVES
REV. KATE THORESEN

A custodian in an inner city church modeled a valuable lesson on the high moral behavior of generosity.

I was involved in an afterschool tutoring program with my good friend, the Rev. Sandra Edwards. She was the pastor of a struggling congregation in West Detroit and director of the mission center there. One Wednesday afternoon, as the kids settled themselves around the table, I noticed the custodian (let's call him Andrew) peer into the classroom. He stuck his cigar into his mouth, took a long puff, squinted one eye and surveyed the situation in one overall glance. Suddenly he disappeared.

In about 10 minutes he returned with an arm full of snacks and refreshments. He bought them from the corner store. He didn't say anything, just walked in and put the sack on the table, clumped on his stool and sort of smiled at Sandra. He asked if we wanted coffee. Then he left, leaving tutors and children to enjoy the treats he provided.

Giving with no strings at-

tached. Giving just because it's needed. Giving with no hidden agendas. Giving that even involves some sacrifice (What do you suppose a custodian earns in an inner-city church?). Yet giving with no big deal in mind.

But Andrew released a great deal in my own mind. How often have we been conditioned to give in exchange for something? For public recognition? For job enhancement? As an investment?

For good "business" reasons? Out of guilt or an uneasy sense of obligation?

How often do we give just for the act of giving, for the fun of it, like Andrew did? His example set in motion all kinds of positive energies. Because he gave in such an enthusiastic, selfless way, I was reminded that these kids and their well-being were of utmost importance. They deserve a safe place to be.

They should have a supportive, caring environment, and a place that would nurture the best in them. It needs teamwork from a lot of caring adults.

And each contribution is significant because it says to the children, "You're important. I want to invest myself in you and with you. Together we can help make this a better place for all of us to live and grow."

Andrew's caring, selfless act be-

came a catalyst for others to build bridges of care and hope.

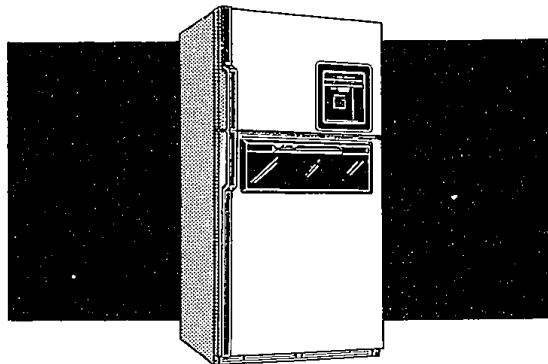
There's something that is positively contagious when people give with no strings attached! Generosity is a positive corrective to a culture infested with dehumanizing greed.

Many people in the inner city of Detroit can teach a lot about the art of selfless giving. There's a church officer at this same location who has chosen to forego her

own education in business administration for this semester. Why? So that she can devote her full attention to this struggling church and community center that must keep its doors open — for the kids in the neighborhood and for the community around it.

Mother Theresa of Calcutta once said, "No person alone can do great things. But every person can do small things with great love."

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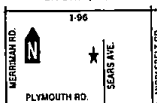
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