

Wyoming Catholics: Disciples of Jesus Christ

By Deacon
Douglas Vlcek
Director of
Stewardship

As I write this final article to you as Director of Stewardship for our diocese, I can't help but reflect on all of the People of God in Wyoming whom I have met over the past two and a half years. Amazing people! People that I can only describe as "disciples of Jesus Christ." Here is what I see in you:

I see people who recognize that they are hugely blessed with many, many gifts from God. And I see people who receive those gifts from God with gratitude.

I see people who work to cultivate, develop, and nurture the gifts they have received responsibly. You honor God by honing your skills, by further educating yourselves, and doing your best in your every endeavor.

You understand that your talents, your time, and, yes, even the material things you have are gifts that God has given you; and you understand that what you do with those gifts are your gifts back to God. You do not "bury your gifts in the ground", like that "wicked, lazy servant"

"We give thee thanks Almighty God for these and all of thy benefits which we have received through Christ our Lord. Amen. And may the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen."

in Matthew 25:14-30. Instead, you multiply what God has given you so that you can use those gifts in a way that gives Him glory!

And I see in the people of Wyoming amazing generosity. I see people who constantly share their gifts lovingly, in justice, with others.

People in Wyoming seem happier than most any other place I have visited in this country, or anywhere in the world. I believe that is closely linked with their generosity.

You see, since we are created in the image and likeness of God, it just makes sense that we are created to be givers. Who can be a greater giver than God, who has given us everything?

Thus, it is only when we are generous that we are truly being who we really created to be: children of God (!) – children attempting to be like their Father in every way, including sharing everything we have with others!

Yes, as I have traveled every corner of our state

over the past couple of years, visiting parishes and speaking with thousands of you, I have encountered disciples of Jesus Christ. I have encountered grateful people who, each day, realizing that everything they have is a gift from God, return their gifts TO God, with increase!

One thing that I heard Bishop Ricken do, literally, hundreds of times will remain echoing in my ears forever. At the conclusion of every meal the

bishop would pray this prayer: "We give thee thanks Almighty God for these and all of thy benefits which we have received through Christ our Lord. Amen. And may the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen."

Many of you recognize that prayer as the traditional Catholic "Prayer After Meals" that you learned as a child.

However, most people, even though we always pray the "Prayer

Before Meals" ("Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts..."), no longer pray the "Prayer After Meals". Since this prayer is, primarily, a prayer of pure gratitude for EVERYTHING we have received from God, we should be praying it often!

I am convinced that if all of us would begin praying this prayer, after each meal, as well as at the moment we awake each day, and before we close our eyes for sleep each night, it would not only make God smile,

but it would also further convert our own hearts: it would constantly remind us and deepen our realization that EVERYTHING we have is a gift from God! This is what true disciples do!

So, now, I pray this prayer, in thanksgiving for all I have received from God, and from you, the People of God of Wyoming, over the past two and a half years; and I ask you to join me in praying this prayer, several times each day, today, and all days from this moment on:

We give thee thanks Almighty God for these and all of thy benefits which we have received through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Many blessings upon every one of you!

Farewell and thanks from Betsy Groom

By Betsy Groom
Director of
Catholic Charities

It hardly seems possible that it was more than 19 years ago when Msgr. Lawrence Etchingham, Father Gerald Sullivan, and the head of the U.W. School of Social Work, Jim Wiebler, interviewed me for the director position at Catholic Charities of Wyoming.

Before retiring the end of June, I want to thank all those I have encountered over my many years here. Past and present, dedicated staff has been on the front line with clients, often working evenings and weekends and juggling agency work with family and other employment.

Co-workers at the Diocese have come and gone, but many friendships have been

formed and maintained. Parishioners have served on the board, supported us, and provided us with meeting places, food, and stewardship help when needed.

To the birthparents who have considered adoption and made parenthood possible for adoptive couples, I commend you.

To the parents who loved their adopted infants as they would biological children and to those who knowingly opted to parent abused, neglected, disabled, and orphaned children, I admire you for helping them maximize their potential and for making a difference in these children's lives.

Social work includes working with communities and organizations, and there are many representatives of these who have become friends and who have helped Catholic Charities clients

over the years. I am grateful to the Charities national office people and network. I've been able to serve on national adoption committees and have enjoyed those in the affordable housing arena and many others helping the poor and hungry of the world.

As I fade into retirement quietly and face the

next phase of my life, I thank the many whom I've encountered and with whom I've shared meaningful experiences. Thank you for caring.

I hope you will continue to support Catholic Charities staff as they carry on in service to others.

May God bless you all!

Editor's note: On behalf of the Diocese of Cheyenne, we would like to thank Betsy for her dedicated and selfless service to Catholic Charities of Wyoming. May God bless you in your future endeavors!

Catholic Charities of Wyoming serves pregnant women who are experiencing an unplanned pregnancy and offers adoption services for infant and special needs adoptions for couples who are thinking about adopting. They can be reached by phone at 800-788-4606 and their main office is located at 2315 Bent Avenue in Cheyenne.

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