

Be the Light...



I am sitting at my laptop with a banana and oyster crackers staring at me from the counter. Providence dictates that God's light permeates especially in times of challenge. And it has been an incredibly challenging weekend for me. If you have ever had a severe case of "food poisoning" you will relate to that hope you might experience "light" at the end of the tunnel.

"Gravely ill" is a good way to describe my condition last evening. There were moments I actually felt like I was going to die. Curled up in the darkness, I felt scared and alone. With my cell nearby in the event I needed to call 911, I started to pray. "Please Father take me out of this darkness and bring some light my way—please heal me!" I found myself longing to get through the night in order to see the sun stream through the window.

I don't know about you, but it is at these moments in my life I envision others who may be experiencing significant struggles and setbacks; those who need some light in their lives. In my case, I was blessed with family checking on me long distance and a best friend who texted me hourly to ensure I was not alone. They were my "light" this weekend...

Just as surely as that Star of Bethlehem guided the wise men, the light of my family and friend brought me out of the darkness. They reflected the light of God's love and it penetrated through the darkness for me.

I am thinking if I can just eat that banana and a few crackers today—I am that much closer to healing and seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. While my feeling of darkness did not debilitate me for a lengthy period of time, it made me think about those feeling paralyzed by the effects of prolonged darkness in their lives?

You and I, any of us, can be immersed in a feeling of darkness. It could be depression, anxiety, fear, anger, despair, illness, and loneliness. Whether that feeling of darkness in life results from bad decisions or bad fortune, we all benefit when we reflect the light of God's love for each other.

And, that is exactly what you provide through your compassion and support of our work!

You are that family in the middle of the night; you are that best friend checking in to ensure those we serve are back to good health, reaching their full potential, and not alone in their struggles.

YOU ARE THE LIGHT!

You reflect the light of God's love penetrating the darkness for:

- Ben—a 72 year old gentleman suffering from mental illness and cognitive deficits following a stroke. We were appointed Ben's guardian, there was no record of any relatives. As his guardian,

we are not only caring for him; we were able to locate his only sister and a nephew who had not seen him in 48 years.

- Sarah—a young single mother who is now able to pursue post secondary education through our “Onward and Upward” program. She will be guided by the light of a licensed social worker acting as a life navigator so that she can get off government assistance, obtain gainful employment, and bring a hopeful future to her cherished children.
- Dan—a middle aged gentleman who has had more than his share of heartaches and struggles this year and is suffering from a feeling of isolation and desperation due to depression. He is now connected with a skilled therapist who is bringing light amidst the darkness for Dan.
- The poorest of the poor needing shelter at the Warming Center this winter who will find an open door and volunteers who will bring the light of God’s love to those who have nowhere to call home.

When you partner with Catholic Charities of Southern Minnesota, you are the light that uplifts the poor and vulnerable. When you light the way for those in need, you glorify God not just this Christmas, but every day of the year!

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

Your compassionate generosity helped light the way for over 6,400 individuals last year (an increase of over 1,900 from the previous year). It is because of you the seventeen programs of Catholic Charities are sustained and able to serve all regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, faith tradition, or ability to pay. You glorify God by your good works!

Our board members, staff, volunteers, and all those we serve hold you close to our hearts this Christmas season. We are forever grateful for the light you bring to our lives.

Even in your darkest hours, may God’s light reveal a path of joy for you and your loved ones. And may his grace and the true meaning of this season penetrate, enrich, energize, and perfect you and me so the his light shines brightly within us always!

Joy to the World!



Director of Advancement—Catholic Charities

(Due to confidentiality reasons, names have been changed in his article)