

AFFIRMING LIFE

ROCKY MOUNTAIN DISTRICT LCMS

Affirming the Lives of our Neighbors Living in Poverty

The following was written in 2013, when I was serving as Director of Human Care at an LCMS church in Cincinnati, Ohio.

"Regarding the distinction to be made between the worthy and the unworthy recipient of alms, Hartmann treats it in a thorough and express manner, and writes, 'Where there is a distinction among the poor, particularly among those who are begging, wisdom is absolutely necessary so that one not strengthen the unworthy in their wickedness. However, because we cannot know a person's heart, one has to be careful not to treat a person as unworthy who is in fact worthy of assistance. Therefore, it is better to give to the unworthy than to deny help to someone who is actually worthy. Even if a person is not worthy, he may still be in need.'" (Pastoral Theology, C.F.W. Walther)

Mercy begins with Jesus. In His earthly ministry, Jesus healed both spiritually and physically. He came to save the entire person, body and soul. Jesus shows love, mercy and compassion. Because of the love and forgiveness we have in Christ, we show His love, mercy and compassion to each other and our neighbors, including those who seem unlovable and unacceptable to society.

In my role as Director of Human Care, I see many people in need of mercy, love and compassion. People come to our church unable to feed their children, with utility disconnect notices (or utilities already disconnected), eviction notices, etc. I've seen people living in deplorable conditions that made my skin crawl just to be in the building. I've seen a family with small children evicted and put out on the street two days before Christmas. In the above quote it states, "Wisdom is absolutely necessary so that one not strengthen the unworthy in their wickedness." How I pray for this wisdom. I find it very difficult to discern when and how much assistance to give, not wanting to enable someone to continue in sinful behavior, but also not wanting to deny assistance to those truly in need. Which is why I especially like this quote from the same paragraph above, "Therefore it is better to give to the unworthy than to deny help to someone who is actually worthy. Even if a person is not worthy, he may still be in need."

Everyone who comes to the door of our church is in need. While I can't always discern with complete confidence that I'm taking the best course of action for assistance (sometimes denying assistance), I do know without a doubt that everyone I come in contact with needs the forgiveness, love and mercy of Christ. So, if one seems "not worthy," he is definitely still in need. He is in need of God's mercy, as we all are. Helping a neighbor in his physical need can open the door for helping with spiritual needs.

Not only do we serve Christ by serving each other and our neighbor in need, but we see Christ in each other and our neighbor, in the weak and the suffering. *"Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."* (Matt 25:40) They are worthy because Christ gave His life for them.

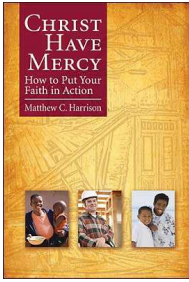
***"By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him. Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth."* (1 John 3:17-18)**

This monthly newsletter, serves to support the Rocky Mountain District in the ministry of defending those who cannot defend themselves and proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to those struggling with life-related issues.

Comments and suggestions are always welcomed and appreciated.
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April 2022



President Harrison's book, *Christ Have Mercy*, is a wonderful resource for those wanting to learn more about showing mercy to the needy in our midst.

<https://www.cph.org/p-505-christ-have-mercy-how-to-put-your-faith-in-action.aspx>

Harrison reminds us that we see ourselves in the saints and sinners, and in the faithless. "To refuse to see ourselves in the faithless is to live a lie. As we consider what it means to live mercifully, there is no better mirror than to see ourselves in the destitute, the blind, or the crippled beggars who plead with Christ for mercy. Have you noticed that those who approach Christ crying for mercy always come away with His blessing?" (page 101)

We are reminded to not overlook physical needs as if they can be separated from spiritual need. On page 105, he suggests that the church can become weak by dividing body and soul. "Christ cared for body and soul. Gospel proclamation is affected when we fail to care for people in need, whether within or outside of the church." The importance of caring for our brothers and sisters in need within the church, as well as those in our communities outside the church is stressed throughout the book.

Making Disciples for Life Seminar Series
Evangelizing the Lost through Life Ministry

Thursday, May 12th

1:00 PM – 5:15 PM CDT

In our witness to the sanctity of human life, we often find ourselves engaged with nonchurched people in one way or another. Some of these nonchurched people are pro-life; others are pro-abortion. Some are seeking services or assistance; others are offering help. Some are standing beside us proclaiming the value of life; others are standing against us proclaiming imagined rights. In these various circumstances and encounters, we have opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus with people who are perishing no matter what their view of life may be.

The *Making Disciples for Life* seminar, "Evangelizing the Lost through Life Ministry," provides a forum for exploring ways in which we can individually and collectively make use of the opportunities to proclaim Jesus that Life Ministry provides for us. Through brief plenary sessions and longer breakout sessions for discussion and sharing ideas, this seminar is designed to provide practical ways to conduct witness and outreach through the Life Ministry you are currently conducting or the Life Ministry you are planning.

This seminar will be conducted live at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis and on-line. Recordings of the sessions will be available to seminar participants through June 20, 2022. There is no cost for this seminar, but registration is required. Registration for either in-person or online participation is open now at <https://cvent.me/yvKQYZ>

LCMS Life Ministry

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Lutherans For Life

www.lutheransforlife.org



Listen to this podcast from LCMS Life Ministry, to hear from life leaders and others who are speaking up about and living out the sanctity of human life.

<https://www.kfuo.org/category/friends-for-life/>