

# The Gifts That Keep On Giving

by Fr. Mark Pavlik

January 22, 2012

There is a theological concept that says that “grace builds on nature” — which means that God’s grace can work for us, but it will build on our own nature. So the better life we lead, the more that God’s grace is going to be able to help us. If we are angry or unkind to others, God’s grace will not be as effective in helping us. If we are open to doing God’s will, His grace will assuredly benefit our cause.

I believe that that also works in the way of vocation. God gives each one of us gifts in our lives. With our participation, we can use our gifts for the betterment of our faith and the Church. Far too often we can separate our prayer life from the rest of our life. But there can be so much more. There comes a time in the life of every child of God when God invites us to follow Him more closely and to participate in His mission. This might require a change of career or at least a transformation of our present careers into a means of service. No matter the career path we have chosen to follow, be it in the teaching, medical, legal profession or retailing business, we have a basic decision to make: to pursue it solely as a means of livelihood and personal enhancement or to use it as a means of service to God and others.

That is what separates a “job” from a vocation. In this Sunday’s gospel, Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James and John to leave their nets and follow him to be “fishers of men.” Get it? Jesus takes skills they have — fishing — and calls them to put those skills to the benefit of the gospel mission.

Christians all over the world continually put their gifts to the benefit of Christ’s gospel. Those with musical skills provide leadership in liturgical worship. Those with financial skills help with financial aspects of the running of parishes and charitable services. Those who have gifts in the area of hospitality help in the areas of outreach and welcoming in so many ways. This year, perhaps you could consider how you might put the gifts that God has given you to use in our parish or other.

In the pew pockets and throughout the complex are brochures that outline opportunities to become involved in ministry here at St. Olaf. The opportunities are as diverse as our parish — there is certainly something for everyone. This year, won’t you allow God’s grace to build on your nature and offer back to God some of the many gifts he has given you?