

ply, we all do. Without action there is no growth as Christians. By our words and actions we will be known as Christians and we become better Christians by practicing our faith. *(Sing) ...and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.* Without action – yours and mine the church cannot fulfill its mission to bring the world to Christ.

In the second chapter of James, verses 14-17 we're told:

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works (and let's substitute the word action here)? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of them says to them, Go in peace, keep warm and eat your fill, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works (action), is dead.

Let's say that together again

**SO FAITH BY ITSELF,
IF IT HAS NO WORKS (OR ACTION)
IS DEAD.**

So there you have it stated clear and simple – faith is dead if it is alone and includes no action. A life of grace cannot exist without the desire to share and since a life of grace is predicated on friendship with Christ, we want to share this friendship with others.

This is where discernment comes in. By first making a friend, being a friend, we can then bring that friend to Christ. It is easy to turn someone off to any idea by presenting it in the wrong way (like a dictator) or at the wrong time (like a prophet). Being a friend and then letting God work through you to bring that friend to Christ is a deliberate and often slow journey. The right friend at the right time (like our "saint").

I'm what some would call a doubting Louis...I need hard, concrete evidence in my Faith Journey. It's difficult for me to just accept things on faith. With my dad as a priest all my life, I was always thinking I could never measure up to what God expected of me because there was always someone who believed better, someone who believed stronger than I did. I never was sure that what I believed was what **I believed**. It wasn't just something that someone else believed and I went along for the ride. I needed to have a faith that was mine and belonged to me. I also began to realize that "hard concrete, evidence was not always going to be easy to spot. As a gay male, growing up in a society that didn't like people that looked different, or talked with an accent, or those that went against "the norm", it was easier to just walk away. I left the church. It would never accept me as I was, so why put out the effort to believe anything. I was out of the church for almost 10 years. But after awhile, there was a little gnawing in the back of my brain...I began to realize maybe I was missing something. I didn't know exactly what it was, but two very good friends (Joe and Mic) listened to my story and

helped me understand that if I was just myself, I would be accepted for who I was and the gifts I had to offer. They said there was a place in the church for me when I was ready to accept it. Among many gifts, I offered the gift of music in it's many forms to several congregations. I served on the vestry, worked on ground crews, and was part of bible study groups, while being myself. These friends also knew when it was the right time for me to go on my Cursillo weekend. They never "pushed" me into anything I was uncomfortable with, but what they were suggesting to me took me outside my comfort zone. I was comfortable not having to deal with church and with God. I was comfortable staying in bed and reading the Sunday Times on Sunday morning. God knows there certainly was lot's of *baggage* to go along with this comfortableness, growing up in the church the way I did.

I realized that at the core of my "problem" was that I had issues with believing and reciting the Baptismal Covenant. It asks, "will you respect the dignity of every human being?". When I left the church I was thinking the church certainly wasn't practicing what it preached. But things changed in my absence. The church began to address some of those issues that forced me to leave originally. To me the church, or at least the Diocese of Newark, was beginning to answer that question in the Covenant in a positive way. General Convention is still addressing these issues, and even though it's uncomfortable for many, I'm proud to be a member of an institution that is willing to deal with issues of respect, inclusively and justice. Joe and Mic accepted my gifts and me. People at Church of the Messiah in Chester began to accept my gifts and me and I have become what I hope is an integral part of the Body of Christ. My faith journey continues. The trip is not over. Stay tuned!

We will begin to perform apostolic action when we make the choice to do so. Will implies a choice and none of our good intentions can become action without choice. The desire alone is not enough – we need will, fired by a desire of such an intensity, that will is translated into action.

Who made you?

God made you and *she* did a great job!

Why did God make you?

To know, love, and serve God in this world and to be happy with God in heaven.

God made each of us to act as God's hands, feet and messengers here on earth.

We need to be those hands, feet and voices – empowered to love and act by the grace of God.

Throughout the Gospels there are countless examples that vividly describe how Jesus actively reached out to others during his three-year ministry through presence, healing and loving. Jesus also worked hard at teaching others about action through his parables. The parable of the Good Samaritan is one that always rang true to me growing up. I could never

continued on page 11