

my mom. I don't stay long and I can't always do it, but when I take that small amount of time, the rewards are spectacular.

You can exercise your Apostolic Action in groups, linked together by friendship or a common interest. When my dad died 2 years ago, the current minister's wife came up to us at the reception after his funeral to say that she was worried that my mom wouldn't be able to get to church any more. (She has macular degenerative disease and can't see well anymore, so she can't drive). The minister's wife set up a car service on a rotating basis. Someone comes each week to pick her up and drive to church and take her back afterwards. For one person it could be a major inconvenience to have to do it every week, but when a group puts their heads together and comes up with a plan, you are on call once every 6 weeks or so.

The congregation also realized that as a group it was "graying" or getting older. There are many that are unable to drive and can't get to church for only that reason. They now offer that car service to anyone who needs it. They've discovered a new outreach to the church community that doesn't require a lot of work. Something small yet meaningful. One person is igniting a small group into apostolic action.

It is not enough to live a good Christian life. True apostles also speak of their love of Christ. The fuel that generates the power to go forth and perform Christian action is Love. Not the hearts and flowers kind of love, but love that is well thought out, planned with great care and given as a free gift. This kind of love comes not from emotions, but from commitments and exercise of wisdom. This kind of love comes from having a relationship with the God that loves us all, as we are, without reservation, knowing all the brokenness in each of us. Apostolic action and love are very much alike. When we think about love being a circular process, that is, self-perpetuating, we can better understand the way apostolic action works – we need to keep in mind that this process must be a conscious one. Let me take you back to our cow slash cat Poopers – she loves me, she loves Joe, but her love surely does not come from conscious, careful planning and an act of the will. We will perform apostolic action when we learn to accept that this kind of action is sometimes passive. Apostolic action is loving enough to be able to be loved. We cannot be true apostles unless we make a disciplined effort to give that love over to others. By giving others the opportunity to love we are working on our own spiritual development. Apostolic action can only happen when we exert ourselves in the cause of spiritual growth.

This story from *Chicken Soup for the Soul* addresses the issue to me as well:

A friend of ours was walking down a deserted Mexican beach at sunset. As he walked along, he began to see another man in the distance. As he grew nearer he noticed that the local kept leaning down,

picking something up and throwing it out into the water. Time and again he kept hurling things out into the ocean.

As our friend approached even closer, he noticed that the man was picking up starfish that had been washed up on the beach and, one at a time, he was throwing them back into the water.

Our friend was puzzled. He approached the man and said "Good Evening, friend. I was wondering what you were doing?"

"I'm throwing these starfish back into the ocean. You see, it's low tide right now and all of these starfish have been washed up onto the shore. If I don't throw them back into the sea, they'll die up here from lack of oxygen."

"I understand," my friend replied, "but there must be thousands of starfish on this beach. You can't possibly get to all of them. There are simply too many. And don't you realize this is probably happening on hundreds of beaches all up and down the coast? Can't you see that you can't possibly make a difference?"

The local native smiled, bent down and picked up yet another starfish, and as he threw it back into the sea, he replied, "Well I sure made a difference to that one!"

I think my favorite piece of scripture is from the Old Testament book of the Prophet Micah. It asks:

"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offering, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

In this day and age we're not into burnt offerings (at least in the crowd I belong to), nor do we have thousands of rams to offer God or ten thousand rivers of oil. We're also not ready to offer our firstborn, but I think the end of this phrase can sum up my personal action plan.

To do Justice – that's living out our baptismal covenant each day. "Will we strive for Justice and Peace and respect the dignity of every human being?"

Love Kindness – Will we practice random acts of kindness daily?

Walk humbly with your God. There is something so serene to me in that image of walking humbly with my God. God directs me in everything that I do, whether it be at home or at work or at play or at rest.

Again as Micah says so eloquently, all that is expected of us, simply all that we have to do is to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with our God.

Through piety, study, and action we can hope to meet God's expectation of us. We CAN make a difference in this world. Remember the story of the man throwing back the STARFISH? Go make a difference!

DE COLORES