

Giving

First of all, let me thank Father Robert for being here to lead the assembly. Father Robert was our College Chaplain a few years ago and is now the priest-in-charge of Emmanuel Church in Pokfulam. The College is forever grateful to him for presiding over all the Monday morning assemblies in the midst of his very busy schedule. His help when we are without a chaplain has been invaluable. There will also be priests from St. Stephen's Church next door joining us occasionally on Wednesday. The clergy's presence is essential because our assemblies are an important feature of our school life. It is an opportunity for the whole school community to gather together to sing praise to God, listen to God's word and pray for God's guidance before we begin our day.

I have already put up on our school web page a schedule of all our assemblies this year. You will have noticed that there is a theme and a Bible verse for each week. The theme of this week is "giving" and the Bible verse is taken from the famous verse John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." On Wednesday, the Holy Cross Day, The Revd. Catherine Graham will address the assembly and on Thursday, a teacher from Ebenezer will come and talk about supporting students who are visually impaired.

What is "Giving"? By definition, it is presenting voluntarily without any expectations of compensation. Hong Kong people are very generous in terms of giving money to a worthy cause. We see this particularly after any ravages of natural disasters or human tragedies. I am sure you still remember that time when we lost one of our alumni in a building fire a few months ago. There was such an outpouring of sympathy for the families of the victims that people from all walks of life were donating money to help.

The Bible is full of examples or stories of “giving”. Can you think of any? One that should come readily to your mind is the parable of the Good Samaritan who helped a seriously injured Jew on the way to Jericho. The story would have been a big shock to the audience at that time because the Jews despised Samaritans.

Then there is the story of the widow’s offering. The Bible says that one day Jesus went to the temple and sat down near the place where the offerings were placed. A poor widow came by and put in two small copper coins. Jesus said this widow had given more than anyone: others gave out of their wealth but this woman gave out of poverty. The widow gave something more than just money. She gave everything that she had.

In the same way, Jesus gave all that he had, even his own life to die on the cross in order to bear the punishment of our sins. Central to the Christian faith therefore is the message of “giving” - giving out of love. The Apostle Paul wrote in the Letter to the Corinthians, “... if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.” God gave his only begotten Son to die on the cross as a ransom for all only because He loved us.

“What can we give?” you may ask. When we talk of “giving”, people often think of donating money. Yet sometimes, what we give does not have to be material or does not even cost a cent: a pat on the back for a classmate who is down in the dumps, an encouraging word for someone in a difficult situation, a phone call for a friend whom you have not seen for a long time, a caring word for your hard-working parents, a visit to your grandparents, a hug to someone who looks like they need it, or a sincere word of thanks to the janitors for keeping the campus tidy and the teachers for helping you to learn. I am sure you can continue the list if you start thinking about what you can give to the people around you, to your class, to your team and to your school.

Giving and Receiving In writing about “giving”, it reminds me of a song that is one of my favourites. It is commonly called the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi:

“Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me bring love;
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;
and where there’s doubt, true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there’s despair in life, let me bring hope;
where there is darkness, only light;
and where there’s sadness, ever joy”.

In many ways, it is a blessing to be able to give because it is in giving that we receive. “Giving” does not make us poorer. On the contrary, it makes us a lot richer because we learn to appreciate what we already have. Next time when you see an advertisement about giving to the needy and you feel the urge to give, think also about the people around you. There is something you can give that even money cannot buy. I hope we can all learn to give generously to others. By doing so, we, in our own very small ways, can make the world a better place for everyone. Amen.

Dennis D. Y. Yuen