

Day 5 Into our case today we place OFFER.

God gives each of us special gifts and talents and has put his treasures of kindness, joy and love inside us. Ask God to help you use your gifts and talents today.

I am reading 'The Road to Daybreak' at the moment by Henri J M Nouwen – a Spiritual Journey. The book offers an intimate record of a pivotal year in the life of an extraordinary person as Henri leaves his position as a professor at Harvard University and moves to a L'Arche Community in Trosly in France where people with developmental disabilities and their assistants live together as friends. I would like to share with you a small part of the book as Henri discovers completely different ways of using our skills.

He writes about Nick who works with four handicapped men in the wood shop and his joys and frustrations. 'He wants to become a skilful and efficient carpenter, but realises that the products of his work is less important than the growing self-esteem of the men he works with. This requires a lot of patience and a willingness to let others do slowly what you yourself can do rapidly. It means always choosing work in which people much less capable than yourself can participate. It asks for a deep inner conviction that a slow job done together is better than a fast job done alone'. Nick 'came to see that his skills were meant not just to make blackboards, play blocks and coat hangers for kindergartens, but also and above all to help four handicapped people grow in human dignity and self-reliance.'

Henri goes on 'I found this out myself this afternoon when I went apple picking with Janice, Carol, Adam, Rose and their assistants. My attitude was to get the apples picked, put them in bags and go home. But I soon learned that all of that was much less important than to help Rose pick one or two apples, to walk with Janice looking for apples that hang low enough so that she herself can reach them, to compliment Carol on her ability to find good apples, and just sit beside Adam in his wheelchair under an apple tree and give him a sense of belonging to the group.

We finally collected four bags of apples, but eight people took more than an hour to do it. I could have done the work in half an hour. But efficiency is not L'Arche's most important word. Care is.'

Prayer

Giver of all human skills,
I give you thanks for the ripened talent of all those I know.
Protect and sustain me as I lie down this night,
and all who feel they have harvested little,
their efforts fruitless, their spirits dry, their struggles in vain.

Hold us all in the doubting of our gifts
until we can treasure in the hidden place
the unique harvest that is ours to bring forth
through good seasons and bad.
May I trust your holding as I go to sleep this night.

Lord, as we open our church for your people may we learn to 'pick apples' in many ways.

Only 6 days to go!

