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MISSION

Why do we find it so easy to identify 'Mission' based service when it occurs far away from us but not see it nearly so clearly when it is close by? This past Saturday our 13 year son returned from a church sponsored Mission Trip to the Navajo Nation in Arizona. What they did was truly wonderful and embodies all the great things that we can think of about altruistic humanitarian mission based service. He learned that with commitment and planning that a small group of people can do some pretty amazing things in a short period of time and under difficult circumstances. We could not be more proud of the group and of course of our own Josh, but 'Mission Work' also happens in all kinds of other ways – with many of those ways being much closer to home and often times it involves retirement age people.

We used to think of 'retirement' as being something close to a permanent vacation. These days I hear more and more people planning ahead and looking forward to their retirement giving them the opportunity to help in ways that they never had the time to do before. My brother Glenn who is younger than I am is already giving thought to his future retirement --- and part of his planning is to look today at some of the groups he is going to finally have the time to get involved with when he retires. Now that is planning ahead! He is looking forward to the opportunity of service --- and he is not alone in taking this approach!

For any of us to age well --- and I might say that this especially applies to men folk – it is important that we not focus primarily on what we are retiring 'from' but what we are retiring 'to'. Retirement should give one more control over how to commit one's time – but it doesn't add hours to the day and certainly shouldn't be solely the pursuit of doing nothing.

Mission trips that take you to different cultures are especially wonderful because you get the chance to learn a new culture not as a tourist – but as someone who demonstrating their support of the people of that culture.

But what about our own backyards? I don't know why --- but it seems like helping in our own backyards doesn't always receive the same respect as it does when one travels to far off lands. This is not a new problem --- Jesus was faced with a similar situation which he summarized as follows: "A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his own family." Sometimes our local volunteer heroes don't command all the respect that they should given the wonderful things that they make happen.

Maybe local service is less glamorous --- but that doesn't make it less important. The good news is that as we get older we tend to value 'glamour' less and less. Older Volunteers tend to move further and further from the spotlight. That makes the older Volunteer the perfect local Volunteer.

Out of the many volunteer run programs in the community three come immediately to mind: St. Vincent DePaul Society, the GOT LUNCH program and the Hands Across the Table program. All three routinely involve dozens of volunteers who are organized and supervised by other volunteers. I'm not sure that any or many of these Volunteers think of themselves as doing 'mission work' but they certainly are. Last year the GOT LUNCH program involved over 200 Volunteers and I expect that Hands Across the Table uses an equal or even greater number --- and it probably wouldn't surprise any of us to find that some people volunteer with two if not all three of these groups!

I know people that have planned their travels around Habitat for Humanity projects in different parts of the country along with others who have taken their vacation time to head down to New Orleans in the months and years following Hurricane Katrina. They come back tired, but refreshed at the same time. There comes a point for many where finding a new place to relax doesn't quite do it for them any more – but putting their time, talent and experience to work to help others does.

Don't forget ---- What you retire 'to' is just as important --- and maybe more important – than what you retired 'from'!

Age Well!

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