

Lent 5B

A very wealthy society lady died and went to the next world. As she looked about, she noticed that her maid, who had died some time before her, was living in a very beautiful mansion, while she herself was assigned to a rather insignificant little house. Immediately she complained to St Peter. 'Don't you know who I am? I am so-and-so, and yet I find that my maid has much more splendid accommodation than I have. What's going on?' St Peter replied, 'I'm sorry to disappoint you, Madam, but, you see, we can only build out of what you send up here, and, I'm afraid, this was the best we could do for you.'

How much material are we sending ahead of us? The only supplies we can use are those selfless acts of love which typify our daily lives. And if we are meagre in that department, then the material sent up won't amount to much.

I'm sure we all know people who rarely put themselves first. The welfare of others, whether in their own families or in the community, oozes out of them - and it's not done to gain recognition either. It's part and parcel of who they are, it's in their bones.

And then there are people whose lives revolve around themselves where the needs of others take a back seat. But that can be reversed. Our attendance at Mass each Sunday, should inspire us to imitate our Saviour who became last of all and servant of all. The more we journey towards God the further we travel away from self. It's the grain of wheat which falls into the ground and dies which yields the rich harvest.

But giving our lives in love doesn't mean we impose ourselves on people with preconceived notions of what we think is good for them. In this way we can easily overlook their real needs

and be less than helpful. But it doesn't have to be that way. Our giving can be done in a very unassuming way through a myriad of small and often unnoticed ways. Jesus asks us to be careful not to parade our good deeds before others to win their esteem. There's very little dying to ourselves in that.

When it comes to love, 'small' is beautiful. A smile, a pat on the back, a word of encouragement, a listening ear, a thank you card, a lift to Mass all can speak far more eloquently the language of love than the grand gesture. I often think about Simon of Cyrene who seemed to appear from nowhere to help Jesus carry His cross and then slips back into the crowd with no mention of him again, Veronica, who wiped the sweat and blood off His face – a small gesture we might say - but just what Jesus needed, and Joseph of Arimathea who gave his own tomb to Jesus. When Jesus needed them most they were all in the right place at the right time with the right kind of help.

Jesus often comes to us in different guises and at times not of our choosing. When we put our own program on hold and focus on Him, unlike the woman in the opening story, God won't run short of material for the building of our heavenly home.