

While We Have Time, Let Us Do Good



Christopher News Notes

*“We are what He has made us, created
in Christ Jesus for good works.”
—Ephesians 2:10*

THE BIBLE IS FULL OF STATEMENTS LIKE THIS, which remind us to spend our days on this earth making the world a better place for others. That’s because our faith needs to be backed up by action. And when we can reflect even a sliver of God’s love to those around us, a divine light will shine that draws people to Him. There are a variety of ways that we can live out the call to perform good works. Here are some examples.

Let Us Do Good

“While we have time, let us do good.” Frank Siller heard that quote, attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, quite often from his parents, George and Mae, when he was growing up.

During an interview on *Christopher Closeup*, he recalled they were devout Catholics who were part of the Third Order of St. Francis: “My parents had seven kids. We were very poor, but we were never too poor to do something for our neighbors. I remember one Thanksgiving, my oldest brother, Russ, told [us] that the neighbor didn’t have anything for Thanksgiving. [My father] actually took our turkey dinner and gave it to our neighbor... And my mother was 100 percent behind it.”

Frank also remembered that his father used to visit the local hospital to talk or pray with the sick. He said, “This is the foundation of our family, of seeing these good, simple works and these acts of kindness and love that we were all brought up with that enabled my brother to make that ultimate sacrifice.”

The brother Frank is referencing here is Stephen Siller, a New York City Fireman who rushed to save others following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Stephen was killed when the Towers collapsed. His six siblings were determined to not only keep his memory alive, but to do it in a way that would help others. In 2002, they created the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation.

Since then, the Foundation has come to build specially adapted smart homes for catastrophically injured members of the military who have lost arms and legs, pay off mortgages for families of first responders who have been killed in the line of duty, pay off mortgages for Gold Star families whose loved ones made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their country, and support a variety of community programs around the nation.

For the motto of the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation, the Siller siblings chose the words of St. Francis they had heard from their

If you were earning one million dollars a year, you might spend your free time relaxing. But that’s not the case with Drue Chrisman, a punter with the National Football League’s Cincinnati Bengals. As reported by *CBS This Morning*, Chrisman wanted to keep his legs strong and in shape during the 2023 offseason, so instead of simply riding his bike around his community, he decided to become a DoorDash delivery person, bringing food to those who order it—and even those who don’t.

You see, as Chrisman biked around the area, he saw many people panhandling and living on the streets. Filled with a desire to give back, he decided to use his DoorDash salary to buy food for the homeless and bring it to them himself, giving them not just physical nourishment, but a touch of kindness and conversation as well. Chrisman knows he is doing something unusual for a professional football player, but he explained, “Seeing that smile, seeing their face light up, no one’s ever regretted making someone else’s day...I like football, but I love giving back. I love helping people.”

parents: “While we have time, let us do good.” They also begin each meeting with the St. Francis Peace Prayer.

Frank explained, “After 9/11, so many people were there for our family. It lifts you to know you’re not alone, and that people care and are praying for you. This is the message that we send to all these great families...We don’t want to just pay off the mortgage or build them a mortgage-free home, a smart home; we want to be part of their lives. They join us on our mission and are our greatest ambassadors because they received it and they want to pay it forward to the next person...The more they do for somebody else, the better they’re going to feel. And they do. It does lift you, it does heal you, and it does give you a great purpose that’s bigger than [yourself].”

Loving Children Who Are Disabled

When Anitra Rowe Schulte gave birth to her first daughter (who she calls “Miss E” to protect her privacy), she wasn’t prepared for a child who had a rare chromosomal condition called Wolf-Hirschhorn syndrome. Wolf-Hirschhorn impacts one in 50,000 births, and manifests itself through low muscle tone, facial differences, congenital heart defects, communication delays, problems ingesting food, and requiring a wheelchair to get around.

Anitra and her husband, Dan, felt alone until they

found resources and a community through the website *WolfHirschhorn.org*. It helped them find the support Miss E needed. In addition, Anitra’s Christian faith led her to pray daily, “God, can You please help me through this day? I want to help my girl grow. This is outside of what I feel like I can do. How can You take the wheel here?”

The Schultes found ways to help their daughter thrive despite her challenges—and now Anitra has made it her mission to help all children with disabilities feel more accepted in their communities.

For instance, she authored a Christopher Award-winning children’s book titled *Dancing with Daddy*, based on Miss E’s experiences. Her goal is to help non-disabled kids be more welcoming and see what they share in common with those who are disabled.

Anitra also works with The Nora Project, which promotes disability inclusion in school settings. When Anitra began taking Miss E to Nora Project events, the youngster got to experience the joys of socialization by playing games and making new friends with other kids her age.

The impact of these gatherings was also immense for the community. Whereas before, people would be afraid to approach Miss E because they didn’t know how to react to her, The Nora Project taught them to simply come up to say hello. “That’s exactly how friendships form, when we lean into

each other," Anitra noted during a *Christopher Closeup* interview.

Helping Alcoholics and Others

Father Ed Dowling, SJ, understood both emotional and physical suffering firsthand. Prior to becoming a priest, he lost his younger brother, James, in the 1918 flu pandemic. And years later, he endured an ever-worsening arthritis that was turning his body to stone, as some described it.

However, the pain that Father Dowling endured grew his compassion for others going through challenging times, making him determined to bring the healing light of Christ to everyone he met.

Dawn Eden Goldstein, author of the Christopher Award-winning biography *Father Ed: The Story of Bill W.'s Spiritual Sponsor*, explained, "I think that anytime someone suffers, they have a choice to fold in upon themselves and be wrapped up in their suffering—or to turn outward. Father Dowling's whole philosophy was that suffering should turn a person outward."

Though he was not an alcoholic himself, Father Ed became a great supporter of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), which had just been created to guide those addicted to alcohol towards recovery. He also became close friends with AA's founder, Bill Wilson, serving as his spiritual sponsor and mentor. Father Ed did whatever he could to promote AA to a Catholic audience because he found the spirituality

of its "12 Steps" akin to Catholic teachings, especially when they referenced surrendering to a Higher Power.

In addition, the 12 Steps emphasized that alcoholics could only maintain their sobriety by helping other alcoholics. During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, Goldstein noted, "I think Father Dowling must have recognized that this is also a very Christian idea...Every Christian has a mission...We have a mission to be Christ among others and to spread that fragrance of Christ wherever we go."

Father Ed reached out to anyone who was marginalized in his early to mid-20th-century era: from African Americans dealing with racism, to individuals with mental health issues, to married couples in need of counseling, to divorced women who felt abandoned by society and the Church. His approach was never to admonish or denigrate anyone, but rather to encourage their inherent virtues and build them up.

Even as Father Ed's own health deteriorated, he never relented in his passion to minister to others. Goldstein said, "He so loved people that he could not be unhappy when other people were around because he was interested in them...Even when they were going through difficult times and he was suffering with them, he felt honored that they were sharing their lives with him...He felt joy in their presence, and this joy made them feel important. Every person he encountered, whether it was the drunk just off the street or the high society person, they each felt that they were the most important person who Father Dowling saw that day."

Father Ed died in 1960 at age 61. He was someone whose commitment to loving God and neighbor never wavered, and the example he set can still be followed by us all. So, regardless of our age, let us remember to follow the timeless words of St. Francis of Assisi: "While we have time, let us do good."



**"It's better to light one candle
than to curse the darkness."**

A non-profit, founded in 1945 by Father James Keller, M.M., The Christophers encourages people to change the world for the better. Donations are tax-deductible. News Notes are published 10 times a year. Single copies are free.

President: Mary Ellen Robinson
Editor-in-Chief: Tony Rossi

The Christophers

212-759-4050, ext. 241

mail@christophers.org • www.christophers.org

Christopher News Note 663

ISBN: 8755-69601

**"Trust in the Lord, and do good."
—Psalm 37:3**