

A FEW MORE WORDS IN SUPPORT OF SERVICE

In this past week's bulletin, I commented on the results of a survey on "job satisfaction" and "career happiness" from the University of Chicago (you can read it in "Pastor's Corner" on our parish's web-site). Clergy ranked extremely high in both of these areas, in spite of the stresses and difficulties of these last few years in the Catholic Church. This past week's *Mobile Press-Register* (the 1 May edition) had an article that I think dove-tails with this very well.

It was the story of Staff Sergeant Larry Gill, who was severely injured in Iraq in 2003. His became a battle with pain, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. These are conditions that turn us inward (sometimes inevitably) in fundamental ways. The further we turn inward, the darker things get.

But grace touched Sgt. Gill's life in the form of a request to help build a specially designed home for another veteran of the Iraq war, who lost both legs. He responded with enthusiasm, and now he is involved in a project called "Homes for Our Troops" (see www.homesforourtroops.org for more information).

The point of this is that Sgt. Gill has gained a new purpose and new lease on life by the process of turning outward, in service, to those he sees as having greater needs than his. Again, this kind of turning outward is not always easy (for some, it seems impossible): but God's grace touched him, he said yes, and now (as the newspaper article said) he can smile again.

One of the subtle ways in which we are touched by the Holy Spirit is precisely in our challenge to see ourselves as we are: with defects and gifts, with talents and limitations, with successes and defeats, and say, "All of these made me who and what I am today; now, what am I going to do with all this, for the sake of the Kingdom and my brothers and sisters?" Seizing the opportunities and extending oneself is a sure sign of positive response to God's grace, and it makes us all capable of contentment, peace, satisfaction (even when dog-tired)—in a word, we can smile again, inside and out.

Is there much else anyone truly wants in this life?