

STEWARDS OF THE NEEDY

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, SELC Stewardship Director

CARETAKERS OF THE NEEDY

The “needy” are generally designated as those wanting in the material necessities of life - food, clothing and shelter. Christ cared about them.

As a steward (caretaker) of the hungry, he miraculously fed over 5,000 people by multiplying five loaves of bread and two fish. (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; John 6:1-15).

Ephesians 4:28 encourages a person to work “so he may have something to share with those in need.” 1 John 3:17 poses a penetrating question: “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?”

As a child I saw the love of God in action through my mother. A beggar came to the door. Seating him on the porch, she provided him with a sandwich, glass of milk, cookies and an orange. After he left, she told me in her “Sharishan” Slovak dialect: “Mushime to robitz pre Jezhisha.” (We have to do this for Jesus).

She then went further to relate the Biblical account of Abraham hosting strangers who turned out to be the pre-incarnate Christ and two angels in human form (Genesis 18:1-15).

WHO ARE REALLY NEEDY?

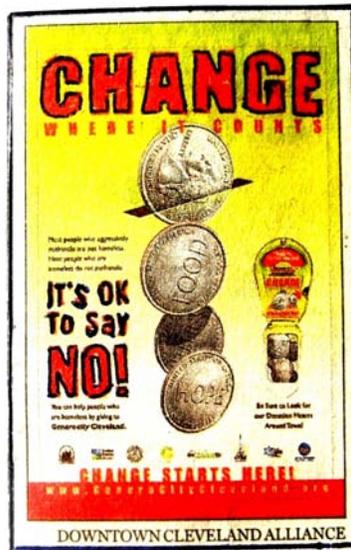
Not all who seek a hand-out are really needy. Some are con-artists seeking to enhance themselves without an honest day’s work. Shortly after graduating from the seminary during my first month of pastoral ministry, a man came to my office relating convincingly about losing a chicken farm in York, PA, and using up his remaining funds to relocate to Lorain, Ohio, for available work in the steel mills. He needed funds to feed his family of wife and four children. I was moved to help but didn’t have the cash on hand. I said I would come to his home later in the day. When I went to the address he gave me, he was not there. The people living in the area knew nothing of him. When I related the story to an

elderly neighboring pastor, he smiled and said, “You’ve met your first “PB” (Professional Beggar) and you’ll meet many more.” I did. Most of them related sob stories and solicited money for food or bus transportation to another city. A “PB” once came to my office dressed in the garb of an orthodox priest (beard and all) seeking funds for an orphanage in Greece.

HANDLING A PANHANDLER

What should you do when a panhandler holds out his hand for hand-out? An Aug. 16, 2008

article in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio, states: “Say no and walk away.” The “Downtown Cleveland Alliance”, a non-profit organization to help the needy, is passing out flyers with the message: “DON’T GIVE WHERE IT CAN’T HELP! IT’S OK TO SAY NO!” Many misuse cash hand-outs to perpetuate alcoholism or drug addiction. The Alliance came up with a unique plan to really help the homeless. Parking meters! Lime green and red meters have been placed - not for parking purposes - but to



receive spare change to help the needy. Donations are given to the “Downtown Homeless Fund” which directly and responsibly helps the needy.

BE A SELECTIVE GIVER

Donor beware! Not all who solicit in behalf of society or for the cause of God are legitimate. Organizations within the framework of the Lutheran Church can be trusted to help us in our stewardship of the needy - Lutheran World Relief; Lutheran Homes for the Aged; Lutheran Family Services; Lutheran Social Service Agencies; Lutheran Hospitals; etc.; etc. In Cleveland, Ohio, Lutheran Churches are united in supporting “Crisis Centers” where the needy may legitimately obtain food, clothing and rent money. Some congregations stock food pantries and run soup kitchens. Be selective!