

Gifts

by Bill Mc Mechan

Here in Canada we are often blessed with many gifts: good health, sound minds, adequate natural resources, and helpful, joyful relationships with family, friends, and sojourners. How wonderful to waken in the morning refreshed by sleep, undisturbed by the fear of someone wishing us harm; to anticipate a day of joyful living with meaningful work or pleasurable interests. These are the gifts of life!

Probably the majority of people on this planet are not privileged in this way. Being of sound body does not automatically mean having a balanced mind. Some are without the wherewithal to maintain a sound body and mind. However, we all receive gifts of some kind and they are gifts given by the Creator of all life.

How do we see these gifts: for our own use to live in a hedonistic way, as selfish clods, only interested in our own pleasure and entertainment? Or do we see them as opportunities for sharing? Do we realize that with the diversity of gifts given to us individually and collectively we are called to share compassionately? If we believe in this idea of sharing, it should include our wealth and particularly our money. When we have more money than is necessary for our maintenance and well-being, we have the responsibility to help others.

Somehow, sharing has not happened. In the larger picture of the world, we see considerable inequality. Rich nations have not shared their wealth sufficiently to relieve extreme poverty existing in many places. Nevertheless, if we understand wealth as a gift to be shared, then we have a responsibility to share it wisely. Care must be taken to assess the needs of the less fortunate, to ensure that our sharing is not subject to corrupt and selfish practices by those involved in the distribution and use of shared resources.

The Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR), a Quaker organization, is an appropriate

example of an attempt to establish a partnership with the poorest of the poor in several parts of the world. The wealth of North American people is harnessed to provide means to enable poor people in South India, Kenya and Sierra Leone to improve their lot.

The key word here is 'partnership'. A partnership must exist between those with money and those with the ability to direct their own lives with appropriate tools and intelligent use of local natural resources. Training and creative ability can lead to viable, self-sustaining communities. The RSWR strategy involves leadership and micro-financing schemes. Acceptance of the responsibility of controlling our wealth and right sharing can be a happy, satisfying experience in practising compassion. John Woolman said it best: "To turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives."

Bill Mc Mechan

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Compassion/Companion

For this little time

I do,

with your permission,
accompany You on your journey
to recovery, to rest, perhaps
to healing.

I share with You

my strength when yours is waning,
my light when yours is fading.

You share with me

the wisdom You are gaining,
your light when mine is questioned.

Undoubtedly around the next corner

there will be a rock
over which I stumble,
a log on which You hold Me,
and we rest.

Janine Gagnier, Victoria Friends Meeting