

Chaplain's Reflection

Dr. Simone and I enjoy reading and discussing the weekly writings of Fr Ron Rolheiser, OMI. We would like to share a recent column of his that was printed in the Catholic Register (May17,2021). It has a profound message against judging others, especially the poor.

RICH KIDS GROWING UP WITHOUT MONEY.

Gloria Steinem once confessed that, while never having been overweight, she has always been concerned about her weight because the genes she inherited from her parents predisposed her in that direction. So, she says, *I think of myself as a fat woman who is slim at the moment*. Her comment helped me to understand something I misunderstood years before in a classroom.

Early on in my seminary studies, taking a course on the sociology of poverty, I was struggling to accept our professor's explanation as to why poverty isn't always the consequence of personal failure, but is often the product of unchosen circumstances, accidents, and misfortune. Many of us in the class weren't buying it, and this was our logic. Most of us had come from very humble economic backgrounds and believed that we had pulled ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Why couldn't everyone else do the same?

So we protested: we grew up poor. We didn't have any money. We didn't get free school lunches. We had to work to pay for our clothes and books. Our parents never took any handouts. Nobody helped them – they took care of themselves. So have we, their kids. We resent those who are getting things for nothing. Nothing came to us free! We've earned what we have.

Our professor answered by telling us that this is precisely why we needed a course on the sociology of poverty. He wasn't buying the notion that we had grown up poor and had earned things by our own hard work. Then, this surprising phrase: *"None of you were poor as kids; you were rich kids who grew up without money;* and where you are today isn't just the result of your own hard work, it's also the result of a lot of good fortune."

It took me years (and Gloria Steinem's comment) to understand he was right. I was a rich kid who grew up in a family without money. Moreover, so much of what I naively believed that I'd earned by my own hard work was in fact very much the product of good fortune. I doubt our society understands that. A number of popular clichés have us believe that one's background should never be an excuse for not being a success in this world, that success is open equally to everyone. We've all inhaled the clichés. *Any poor kid can grow up to be President of this country! Any poor kid can go to Harvard! Anybody industrious can make a success of his or her life! There's no excuse for any healthy person not having a job!*

Is this true? Partially, yes; kids from poor economic backgrounds have become president, thousands of poor kids have found entrance into the best universities, countless kids who grew up poor have been highly successful in life, and people who are motivated and not lazy generally do make a success of their lives. However, that's far from the whole story.

What really makes for the separation of rich and poor in our world? Is everyone really on equal footing? Is it really virtue that makes for success and lack of it that makes for failure?

In a best-selling book, *Elderhood*, Louise Aronson, makes this comment about her mother and Queen Elizabeth, both who aged wonderfully and gracefully: "They both were born into privilege: white, citizens of developed countries, wealthy and educated. Both were gifted with great genetic DNA, and both had the good fortune of not ever having been assaulted, abused, felled by cancer, or in a debilitating car accident. ... These advantages are not a matter of character. *Indeed, willpower and capacity for wise decisions are often by-products of fortunate lives.*" (Emphasis, mine)

Success isn't predicated only on personal character, hard work, and dedication. Neither is failure necessarily the result of weakness, laziness, and lack of effort. We aren't all born equal, set equally into the same starting blocks, have equally gifted or abusive childhoods, are allotted equally the same opportunities for education and growth, and then are parceled out equally the same measure of accidents, illness, and tragedy in life. However, it's because we naively believe that fortune is allotted equally to all that we glibly (and cruelly) divide people into winners and losers, judge harshly those we deem losers, blame them for their misfortunes, and congratulate ourselves on what we have achieved, as if all the credit for our success can be attributed to our own virtue. Conversely, we see those who are poor as having only themselves to blame. Why can't they pull themselves up by their bootstraps? We did! But ... some of us have genes that predispose us to become fat, some of us are rich kids who grow up without money, and willpower and capacity for wise decisions are often the products of a fortunate life rather than a matter of character. Recognizing that can make us less cruel in our judgments and far less smug in our own successes.

Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

Over the past few weeks we have been praying for the people of Afghanistan and for the safe evacuation of Canadian citizens and refugees from that country. For twenty years the United States and countries of the Nato alliance, including Canada, have occupied Afghanistan. It was reported in the National Post (Wednesday, September1, 2021) that the United States was spending \$300 million a day, for the past 20 years, trying to rebuild and fortify that country. Much of this money was spent on military equipment and was stolen by corrupt people. Canadian Food For Children can provide a nutritious meal for a hungry child for 5 cents. Wouldn't it be great if the rich countries of the world declared war on child poverty and hunger? \$300 million a day, spent properly, could feed the world's poor. No child would go to bed hungry.

Let us always remember to love and defend the unborn. Many world leaders want us to believe that children and population growth are a problem. Children are always a great blessing from God. People who think it's OK to spend \$300 million a day, for twenty years, on an unwinnable war in Afghanistan; they might be the problem?

Brian Finamore

Shipment Weights by Country Summary for:

2021

	# of Shipments	Weight (kgs)	(Metric Tonnes)	(Pounds)	(Tons)
			[=kgs/1000]	[=kgs * 2.205]	[= Pounds / 2000]
Angola	12	197,947	198	436,473	218
DOMINICA	2	31,443	31	69,332	35
EL SALVADOR	71	1,107,971	1,108	2,443,076	1,222
Guatemala	1	14,514	15	32,003	16
HAITI	6	94,207	94	207,726	104
HONDURAS	18	282,270	282	622,405	311
Jamaica	12	183,887	184	405,471	203
Malawi	3	45,949	46	101,318	51
PERU	34	514,477	514	1,134,422	567
Sierra Leone	15	249,617	250	550,405	275
Zambia	8	113,189	113	249,582	125
Total	182	2,835,471	2,835	6,252,214	3,126

Praise the Lord that we have been able to send 182 containers to God's Poor so far this year. Thank you for your generous donations and for all our volunteers and helpers.

Together we are channels of God's peace. With each container we bring hope where there's despair, light where there's darkness and joy where there's sadness. You can see this on these precious children's faces.

Lord, make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
And where there's doubt, faith.

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there's sadness, joy.

Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in giving that we receive;
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Amen

Thank you and God Bless,
Eva-Marie Moffat (nee Simone)



St. Vincent de Paul Community receiving a CFFC container, Zambia, Africa