

Wednesday, March 25

The Difference Between Talking and Doing

Pastor Hank

Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions. Matthew 19:21-22

People of faith often find themselves thinking and talking about things like love and justice – after all such things are at the heart of Jesus' teaching. But thinking and talking are not the same as doing. Some years ago I came across a great story about Mother Teresa which highlights the difference between talking and doing.

At one point in her long career, Mother Teresa visited Australia. A young Franciscan brother in Australia was assigned to be her guide and "gofer" during her stay. Needless to say, he was thrilled at the prospect of being so close to Mother Teresa and excited when he thought about what they would talk about and all he would learn from her. But it wasn't to be. Although he was constantly near her, the friar never had the opportunity to say one word to Mother Teresa because other people were always around her commanding her attention.

Finally, her Australian tour was over, and she was due to fly to Papua New Guinea. In desperation, the friar spoke to Mother Teresa: "If I pay my own fare to New Guinea," he asked, "can I sit next to you on the plane so I can talk to you and learn from you? I want to hear your thoughts about working with the poor."

Mother Teresa looked at him. "You have enough money to pay airfare to New Guinea?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," he replied eagerly.

"Well then, give that money to the poor," she said. "You'll learn more from that than anything I can tell you."

She was right, of course. Abstract ideas like love and justice only become concrete and real and full of rich meaning when the talking stops and the doing starts.

Prayer: God of never-ending love, this day, with my family and friends and co-workers, let me live love and do justice. Amen.