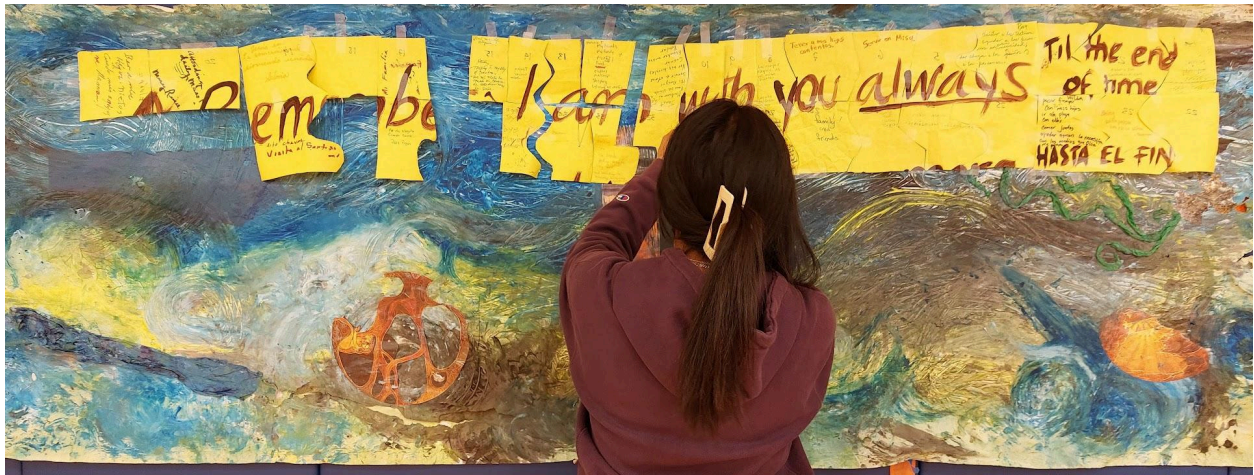


Economics of Generosity



Mixed media mural created by community members in a retreat at St. Mary's Church.

The transactional mindset is: I do this for you because you did this for me.

The problem is that sooner or later one of us will burn out or we will reach our capacities or our check and balances will be thrown off by external circumstances--like an unexpected bill, theft, or accident.

There is another mindset sometimes operative, which I might call "The limited love" mindset is: I love you therefore I do this for you.

The problem with "the limited love mindset" is that such understanding of love can only take us so far. We can only do so much. I can't love unconditionally unless I am loved unconditionally because we have limits: limited time, limited energy, limited capacities, limited money, etc.

Instead of the transactional and the limited love mindsets, there is another mindset grounded on the economics of generosity. This mindset and lifestyle revolve around the principle that we are always in debt when it comes to love because we were always loved first. Something or someone had to generate our capacity to love and set the ripple effects in motion.

Another visual is creation itself. The planetary system emerged from a beginning that set the planets to revolve around a center in concentric circles, this center is known as the sun.

What if, our lives, our energy, our money, our choices, revolved around the SON? what if our economic systems, relationships, communities revolved around the SON?

For me, to live my life around Christ translates to a life shared with Christ--the unjust deaths, the unjust suffering, the ill-treatment. To have my life revolve around Christ means that my most intimate pain is shared with Him and my highest paid gig is also shared with Him.

Such relationship with Christ has demanded an awareness of abundance contrary to what I typically know. Instead of riches, material gain, there is trust, providence, community. Abundance therefore is based on an overflow of connection not on overflow of amount. What if we only owned what we needed? and every time someone we are connected to is in need and we offer support discerned in prayer, the expenses are covered or provided for because of the community we are connected to? This model works! I live from it.

In my experience, no economic or communal system, no relationship or partnership is ever sustainable without a connection to an eternal bounty, to a solid source.

If both parties are Christ centered relationships thrive, if communities are Christ centered, communities thrive, if economic systems are Christ centered then equity and equality can be redefined no longer centered by what is lacking but by our connection: we are all heirs of a kingdom beyond this realm.

My emphasis on eternal connection stems from the experience that ultimately, everything dies, ceases and ends in some form--the attraction, the power, the cash flow, but if connected to Christ, the partnership, the relationship, the economy--lives. The source of abundance needs to be connected to Him who defies death.

I have known death in different forms throughout my life. I struggled with bipolar disorder and have had four manic episodes that feel as though I have died four times. On my last one on November of 2020 I was stripped from everything I knew, including my own consciousness, community and material possessions. Indeed it is in the deepest pain we experience--death, where Christ meets us. Whether it'd be physical, emotional, spiritual, economical, all death can be met by Christ. He died. He also rose.

Nothing could have prepared me for the losses experienced in those hospitalizations from manic episodes or for the blank, barren and disconnected state I face every time I am discharged. Yet, somewhere in my soul I know He was there and He continues to be, along with family, and a few loved ones which makes the long rebuilding process possible.

Such awareness of my limits, my brokenness, my hunger for meaning, lead to me say, I simply can't live without Him, not because of my mental illness or the traumas I've had but because nothing else can withstand the depth of what it means to be really human and authentically connected: limited and heir to eternity.

By that I mean that the root word of "generosity" is "gen" which is beginning-like in genesis but also equivalent to noble birth. We are indeed heirs to the kingdom beyond this realm in which love is the transaction, the daily bread and sustenance.

In my case, because of my life and His grace, I know that everything I own from bills, to pain, to my mind is made of dust, how generous is His creativity!

How generous of Christ to remind me every day of my birthright to be His child by feeding me, by being with me from hospitals, drownings, to conferences— by being with me always. How generous of Him to journey endlessly with my cross and remind me that I belong to God, from which all eternal abundance is possible.

Video option, check it out: https://youtu.be/8OKbPsGC8cw?si=kTmiBwJy_ymdQ51H