

World's Longest Help Wanted Ad

"I will attempt day by day to break my will into pieces. I want to do God's Holy Will, not my own."

–St. Gabriel Possenti

In early September of 2021, I was in my kitchen, packing my lunch for work. While I really enjoyed my job as a nurse at a local outpatient surgery center, there were some clear signs that there was something else God was asking of me. And so I said the words that I now realize can be quite dangerous:

"God, if there is something else that you want me to do, somewhere else you want me to be, could you PLEASE just drop it in my lap? I honestly cannot figure out what you want from me?" I was very sincere and respectful and fully prepared to accept whatever God put "in my lap". I imagined it would be something that aligned with my own interests and hobbies. You know, something "fun".

At around 10:00 am that very morning, while finishing up discharge instructions for a patient preparing to go home, my smartwatch notification lit up to reveal a text from Fr. Earl,

"Kate, when you have a minute, could you please give me a call?"

Fr. Earl never texts me. Never. We had spoken on the phone a few times, which is why he had my number. And I had put his contact into my phone, because, you know, it's good to have a quick link to God in your contacts! I discharged my patient and slipped away from the nurses station to call Father. On a couple of previous occasions, Fr. Earl and I had discussed my job and some of the things happening in health care. He knew I was conflicted over some system changes taking place, but he also knew I enjoyed my job.

"Hi Father, what's up?"

"Kate, how are things going at work? Do you know what you're going to do?"

"Well, they are ok. And no, not really."

"Well, Kate, listen... umm, our parish health nurse, Barb Evans, is retiring at the end of September. I have been thinking of her replacement and you come to mind as someone who might be good in this role. I don't know, maybe this is Providential....but is this something that maybe you would be willing to prayerfully consider?" (MIC DROP MOMENT)

Providential. Yes, he used THAT word. Please refer to my morning lunch making discussion with God. I have learned that sometimes figuring out God's will can be like navigating a corn maze. But other times, He is jumping up and down in a clown suit, with a flashing neon sign pointing us where He wants us to go. This was one of those times. The only thing was, I didn't know why.

Fast forward to the end of February, where we are now. While there are some very cool things in the works in regard to parish health, my idea of fun and God's purpose for placing me here aren't quite matching up. I have been forced to take an uncomfortable look at myself and what it means to be a good Christian. This job has forced me to reflect deeply on how my husband and I have parented our four children, ages 15-23. It has made me realize just how much our culture reflects our societal values and how we have unwittingly accepted those values by blindly following along, falsely believing that we were teaching our kids how to be people of service. After all, my kids all did service hours for confirmation and graduation. My oldest son went on two mission trips to Guatemala in high school. We care about our neighbors in need because we always donate to the school food pantry collections and mission outreaches. I mean, what more do you want, Lord? We've checked the "are you a good person?" boxes and yeah, I think we all are in our family!

And our tender, loving and Almighty God smiles and pats my head as if to say,

"I am pleased with those things. But less than a mile away, right down North Bend road, there is a homebound parishioner who is struggling. He is incontinent, lonely and physically limited. His laundry is piling up because he struggles to navigate the basement steps. He needs groceries. Won't you be my hands and feet and go there and love him? Won't you also go a mile further and sit for two hours and listen to another homebound parishioner talk about her cat because she hasn't had a visitor and hasn't been out of the house in weeks? Oh and by the way, it's not glamorous, over time you are going to gain a couple of pounds from all the sitting and talking you aren't used to doing and no one is going to know that you are there. You aren't going to get much glory in this life, BUT...THEY WILL KNOW I LOVE THEM BECAUSE I SENT YOU."

Suddenly, I see clearly one of many reasons our society has such a high number of adults and kids dealing with anxiety, depression, restlessness, hopelessness and loss of motivation. We keep ourselves busy doing many things, but they aren't always the things God wants. We wring our hands and shake our heads at the younger generation and their inability to be resilient. At their inability to cope with even small amounts of stress. At their selfishness. We blame it on technology, we blame it on everything and everyone around us. The hard truth is that when we live our lives in opposition to their intended purpose, restlessness and anxiety are often the result.

If I am honest, I mean TRULY honest, I see how my example of what it means to be a good person in terms of checking boxes, rather than loving others through self sacrifice, has impacted my children.

I sent my son to Guatemala, while ignoring the needs and sufferings of my next door neighbor.

I could choose to beat myself up and wallow in regret for not teaching my kids differently. I have already thought of the countless missed opportunities when they were little. Why didn't I take my hyper preschooler to the local pregnancy center to fold onesies for babies when she wouldn't nap? Why didn't I have my high school sons automatically shovel the walkway for the widow who lives behind us? Why didn't we go visit Grandma for no reason other than to show her we love her and she matters? Why didn't I do the things that would have shaped my children's values differently? The answer is simply because I didn't realize how much those things really do matter. And because it was never an intentional neglect of others, I do give myself some grace. And if this speaks to you, I encourage you to do the same. However, in this role, as your parish health nurse, I am here to tell you, they matter. And they matter so much more than we can possibly imagine.

As people made in the image and likeness of God, with both bodies and souls, we were created with purpose. As Catholics, we understand the Christian mission of service, but does knowing it and understanding it take root and move us to action? My goal is to inspire and encourage the St. Ignatius community to begin to see service not in terms of checking boxes, but rather something we do out of love for God, his people and ourselves. Our parish desperately needs people to love those around us in ways that are really small, but make a big impact. I am sad to say the response to calls for help have been minimal.

Men and women, young and old, would you prayerfully consider joining the parish health ministry and our efforts to love our neighbors as ourselves and bring the gospel of Jesus to life? If so, please reach out to me at krewwer@sainti.org or call (513) 661-6565 ext. 2742.

May God Bless you and keep you safe,

Kate Rewwer