

I sit on the board of the Cameron Food Pantry. So far this year the pantry has given away almost 60,000 pounds of food to over 2,000 people. Volunteers contributed over 3,000 hours so far this year, which is truly remarkable. Our year-to-date figures look pretty good, even though contributions were light last month. Here at church we collect nonperishable items or cash contributions on the first weekend of every month. A lot of people have said they intend to give, but they forget. We now have a special box in the gathering space designated for the food pantry. So if you forget to bring food or just want to slip even a dollar or more in the box, you can do so very easily now. The pantry can get more food for the dollar than you and I can get in the store, so cash is always welcome. But there's also something good about going to the store with the intention of buying something specific for those who need it. How you give is totally up to you.

The pantry has received grant money to set up a website, but we still have not found someone to build it. We'll have a grocery store fundraiser at the end of September, but we still need to promote it. We need a strategic plan, but we haven't found someone to do it. Many clients who need food also need education on how to prepare it, and how to balance a diet. The leaders at the pantry are great people, but they can't get everything done, so the board is trying to help them expand the vision, attract more funding, and use volunteers well.

Even if you are able to put food on the table at home and to prepare meals that are nutritious, you know that making prudent choices about food and expenses is a constant battle. The help we give a local food pantry is wonderful, but we also need to make prudent choices about the systems in our country that allow poverty to continue. The American bishops said earlier this election year, "We have a responsibility to discern carefully which public policies are morally sound. Catholics may choose different ways to respond to compelling social problems, but we cannot differ on our moral obligation to help build a more just and peaceful world through morally acceptable means, so that the weak and vulnerable are protected and human rights and dignity are defended."

Every time we help other people, we do without something. We may sacrifice our time, our opinions, our preferences, or our comfort. Our care for the vulnerable may look strange in a society where we are urged to make personal comfort our priority.

Saint Paul writes to the Romans, "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect." If we transform our minds, we will live in a way that discerns God's will and strengthens us to do it. We transform our minds by forming good habits, whether it is helping the hungry in our own community or supporting members of the family in their times of need. When our mind is on track, our actions will be good and pleasing and perfect.