

My junk mail assures me it only wants to help. Whether it's office equipment, garden catalogues or sweepstakes, they only want to serve me. But I can't help thinking somehow I'm going to end up serving them. The Royals recently announced they were lowering the price of general admission tickets for next year (assuming there is a next year). A letter to the *Star* this week said, "Sure they're gonna lower what you pay for tickets. Then they'll raise the price of parking and hot dogs." When someone offers to serve, cynics will ask, "What's their motive? Why do they want to serve?"

At least James and John are honest about it. They serve Jesus because they want front seats in the kingdom of God. They're like Sally in *Peanuts* who says the real meaning of Christmas is not to give gifts but to get gifts. Jesus reminds the apostles that for him, service is good in itself, not because it wins some reward.

This weekend we begin the long process of bringing new members onto our councils in the parish. Although nobody mistakes a seat on our councils for a seat on the right or left of Jesus in the kingdom of God, this is a sobering text to hear at St. Regis today because it asks us to probe inside the heart and ask why we wish to serve. Why do we go to church? Why do we believe? Why do we or have we volunteered to help the parish? Why do we contribute? Is it prestige? Is it to get something back? Or is it service, genuine love for a neighbor?

I think the spirit of service in our parish is outstanding. The fall festival proved it again this year. And last week the diocesan accreditation team visited our school, approving the accreditation we'd hoped for. The report stressed points like the obvious involvement of parents and the teamwork among teachers. It praised the spirit of Christian community which pervades our school. It gives great comfort to know that our children are learning service as well as science, religion as well as reading, and community as well as computers. It's a privilege to be part of a parish where service for its own sake is modeled and valued.

But the real measure of success in service is when that same spirit pervades other parts of life--when family members serve one another not to get something back, but out of love; or when businesses offer fair breaks for customers, employees, and management. The spirit of Christian service so prized at the parish belongs in every facet of our lives.