

INSIGHTS *Past the Pew*

ST. JOHN NEUMANN ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH

SUMMER 2014

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TRANSITIONS
IN LIFE
AND IN FAITH

THE GOOD SHEPHERD ATRIUM: AN ENVIRONMENT FOR GROWTH

And other seeds fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

Mark 4:8

As parents, we want what is best for our children, hoping to help them grow into well-rounded successful individu-



als. Our hectic, goal-oriented society offers our children an endless variety of activities – from playing one or more sports to learning a musical instrument to developing their artistic side. All of these activities are designed to enrich our children's lives and help them grow.

I would venture to say not all growth is outwardly visible. What about spiritual growth? The spiritual growth of our children may be the missing piece of the puzzle.

What if I told you there is a place where children can come to know the love that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has for each one of them? St. John Neumann's Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, faith enrichment for children from ages 3 –12, offers an environment where personal spiritual growth can happen. It is a place where the children can develop a personal relationship with Jesus.

The atrium - the specially prepared space where the children work and pray - offers a break from the busy pace of the world we all live in today. In this peaceful place, the child has time to ponder the great treasures of our faith – the Holy Bible, the Mass and the Sacraments. Montessori principles guide both the methods and materials used in the atrium.

During each session, a catechist gives a presentation that has been carefully selected based on 60 years of research that has determined the most essential theological material for children of that age. Presentations follow the church calendar and relate what the children are learning in the atrium to what happens at

Mass. Children also do personal work that allows them to continue to ponder the spiritual truths they have heard and begin to understand them at their own pace. The children become a small community where they feel comfortable singing their own songs to God and praying about things they are thankful for including their families, new babies, and each other.

I have three children who are currently in Levels I, II and III. They all started in Level I at three years old. In the beginning I was skeptical of what actually was occurring in the atrium, but my oldest daughter's spiritual growth during her first two years motivated me to train to be a catechist for Level I (ages 3-6). I have had the pleasure of being a catechist for four years. It has been such a gift to see how this method of catechesis is good soil where my children can grow. Good Shepherd is truly unique and wonderful.

Please think about giving your own child this amazing opportunity to grow spiritually. As with other activities, the support you give and the value you place on your child's spiritual formation is essential to motivate them. Take advantage of this awesome opportunity that St. John Neumann has to offer our children.

Noelle Evancho

Faith Enrichment Opportunities

Details and Deadlines (June 1st)

Please read carefully as there are some important changes from last year.

Saint John Neumann Parish values families and seeks to offer you and your children the best possible faith enrichment experience. An explanation of upcoming programs follows. A full grid of days and times for all Program Offerings plus registration materials can be found on the Saint John Neumann website: stjohnneumannpgh.org. We thank you for your attention to this important component of Catholic life.

What faith enrichment opportunities are available at Saint John Neumann?

We try to offer something for every age in our faith journey. Faith enrichment begins at conception, as parents prepare to welcome this new image of God into their family. Baptism preparation is the first step in helping parents to reflect on this awesome experience and to open their hearts to the life that God has entrusted to their care. The baptismal rite states that the parents are the first and best teachers of the faith for their children.

Is there a faith enrichment program for preschool children?

At Saint John Neumann, we offer once-weekly faith enrichment sessions for children who will be three by September 1st up to age six. Level I (Ages 3-6) Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, based on Montessori principles of individual hands-on learning, helps children to develop and enjoy a relationship with Jesus, the Good Shepherd, through liturgy, prayer, and parables. Because this

program is designed to tap into the spirituality that is already strong in children this age, we recommend that you enroll your child at age three or four.

What is offered for our elementary school children?

1) Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a weekly program based on Montessori principles of individual hands-on learning.

Level II (Grades 1-2) expands on Level I themes which are then related to seeing God's presence all around us, and in a special way in the sacrament of Eucharist. Children also learn the Great Commandment and related moral teachings and parables in preparation for celebrating God's forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Level III Transition (Grades 3-4) continues to look at the History of the Kingdom of God, the Mass, the Bible, sacraments, and new parables.

Level III (Grades 5-6) introduces the Plan of God, exploring themes of creation, exodus, redemption, and parousia as viewed through the actions of Old Testament people and events that prefigure the mystery of Christ we see in the New Testament. *Parents are required to attend one session each semester with their child in Level III.*

Family Masses, held on Wednesday evenings, are also part of the program for all levels of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

2) Weekly Faith Formation classes (at Sts. John & Paul) for Grades 1-5 incorporate textbook learning in a classroom setting with seasonal large group events.

3) Family Program students (Grades 1-5) homeschool with a textbook and

complete online reviews, then attend monthly Sunday morning sessions at SSJP with at least one parent.

When and where does my child prepare for First Reconciliation and First Communion?

At the conclusion of a Grade 1 Faith Enrichment program, SJN children (no matter where they attend Faith Enrichment) and their parents meet at SJN to begin sacramental preparation with a prayer experience and workbooks

(to complete at home). Family activity and practice sessions are scheduled

prior to reception of the sacraments. Students focus on the meaning of these sacraments in Level II Good Shepherd (1st and 2nd Grade), although preparation for Eucharist truly begins in Level I. Registration and participation in faith enrichment are required for adequate sacramental preparation. *The Diocese of Pittsburgh policy for First Communion/First Reconciliation is a two-year preparation.*

What are my choices for Grade 6?

1) Good Shepherd Level III (Grades 5 & 6) allows children to continue work on themes of scripture and liturgy begun in earlier levels. *Parents are required to attend one session per semester with their child in Level III.* 6th graders also meet once a month following 11:30 am Mass for social and service activities.

2) Weekly 6th Grade Faith Formation classes at Sts. John & Paul are offered for children who have been attending at SSJP for Grades 1-5.

*Online registration
now available!*

What are my choices for Grades 7&8?

Three 3-hour evenings of reflection at SJN during Summer 2014 (all three evenings are part of the program for all 7th and 8th grade students), PLUS:

1) Monday (6:30 -8:00 PM) weekly Small Faith Sharing Groups centered on Sunday readings. (Monday students are also invited and encouraged to attend Youth Group when possible.)

or

2) Middle School Youth Group twice a month from 6:30–8:30 pm on Wednesday,

How are young people prepared for Confirmation?

Confirmation at SJN is in the fall of 9th grade. According to Diocese of Pittsburgh policy, there is a three-year preparation for Confirmation. This includes attendance at religious education for Grades 6, 7 and 8 plus special classes, a retreat and service prior to Confirmation. Immediate preparation for Confirmation is held each year for 8th graders on Wednesday evenings in May (five sessions).

St. John Neumann parishioners participate in sacramental preparation and receive sacraments at SJN. Attendance at weekly Sunday Mass is presumed.

Changes in 5th and 6th grade programs on page 4

What is offered for high school?

High school teens in Grades 9 through 12 gather twice a month as High School Youth Group after 11:30 a.m. Mass on Sundays during the school year. Retreats, socials, and service opportunities including the annual SJN Appalachia Workcamp round out the high school program.

How do I register?

All Saint John Neumann parishioners should register their children for faith enrichment using the St. John Neumann form regardless of whether your children's program will take place at Saint John Neumann or at Saints John and Paul. Both the electronic and paper forms are on the St. John Neumann website. **We ask that you submit your form electronically or return a paper copy to our office by June 1st.** They will be processed in the order received.

Families will receive notice of their assigned day and time in mid-August. A Baptismal Certificate is required at the time of registration for children who are enrolling for the first time and who were not baptized at Saint John Neumann Church. Out-of-parish families will additionally need a letter from their pastor permitting their child(ren) to receive religious education at Saint John Neumann.

Are there fees?

To help with our expenses, we request a materials fee:

For parish families – \$60 for 1 child/ \$110 for 2 children/\$150 for 3 or more children.

For out-of-parish families – Regular fee plus \$50 per child (up to \$100 maximum extra per family).

If you have already registered someone for Confirmation classes, and are registering an additional

child or children now, you should not register and pay for the Confirmation candidate again. If your family cannot pay the materials fee, please call the pastor at (412) 366-2020 Ext. 20. Faith enrichment does not depend upon ability to pay.

Will textbooks be supplied?

To complement the child's work in the atrium or classroom, all programs (whether at Saint John Neumann or Sts.

John & Paul) provide written materials approved by the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Make-up work will be required for missed classes.

Are children with special needs welcome?

We welcome all children, including those with special needs, into our programs, since the Body of Christ is incomplete if anyone is missing. We will work with parents to make accommodations, if necessary, to create an environment where children can grow in the Catholic faith and receive the sacraments of the Church. It is very important that you fill out the Special Needs form that is part of the Registration Form. In addition to full inclusion, we offer a Good Shepherd atrium for children with special needs (ages 6-12) once a month on Saturday mornings.

How can I help?

Our faith enrichment ministries could not exist without you. You do not need to have children/family enrolled in order to help. Indicate your availability on the Registration Form or call the Religious Education Office at Ext. 12. The time, skills and gifts you share strengthen our parish community.

Who can I contact?

If you have any questions about sacraments, please call Barbara Stokes at Ext. 13.

For questions about Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, call Barbara Matera at Ext. 18.

For questions about middle school or high school, call our Youth Minister at Ext. 14.

Call Kathy Masters at (724) 935-2104 Ext. 236 for questions about programs offered at Sts. John & Paul Parish.

CHANGES IN 5TH AND 6TH GRADE PROGRAMMING

Exciting changes are in store for Level III (5th and 6th grade) Good Shepherd students in 2014-15.

Level III will involve parents in the atrium, in a “co-op” format.

After session assignments are made in August, families will choose one day per semester when a parent can stay with their child for a Level III session. We hope that giving parents the opportunity to share in the works being presented to their child will encourage family prayer and lead to conversations about faith and spirituality.

Today’s 5th and 6th graders have a great deal of sophistication and the ability to synthesize complex ideas. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in Level III continues to challenge students to grow both intellectually and spiritually. We delve into

the Old Testament roots of the New Testament, including both the history of the Jewish people and some of the key events, prophets, and patriarchs from the Old Testament. We also broaden the scope of our New Testament studies to include the miracles of Jesus and some new parables. We study the many prayers that make up the Mass, two new sacraments – the Sacrament of the Sick and Confirmation, and the Virtues. All the while, we ponder “The Plan of God” and the place each of us has in it. While it is difficult to cover all this material in only two years, we try our best.

In the coming year, we are also adding a new component to the program for students in Level III who are in 6th grade. Once a month during the school year, following 11:30 a.m. Mass, our youth minister

will plan either a social or service activity *only for 6th graders*. Spending time together building friendships and serving others will allow students, who come from a variety of schools, to form a strong community as they begin their three-year period of preparation for Confirmation. Attendance will be taken at these Sunday sessions, which will round out the 6th grade program together with weekly Good Shepherd sessions and Family Masses.

We are grateful to parents for their feedback which helped us to evaluate what should be done differently for 5th and 6th graders. We look forward to working more closely with parents during these important formative years for their children’s faith and character.

Barbara Matera

ENCOUNTER & IGNITE YOUTH MINISTRY

IGNITE: Welcome to our IGNITE Middle School Youth Ministry program. Our program meets every other Wednesday evening throughout the school year. Organized with the help of an incredible core team (consisting of high school teens and adults), we have developed a program that we truly believe “Ignites” the faith within the hearts of our middle school students here at SJN. It’s been such a blessing to see the Lord working in their lives this past year. From a weekly scripture study on the gospels, to exciting and engaging games and small group discussion, the youth have truly embraced their faith in a new way.

New to the program this year is our service component. We have had an awesome group of parent volunteers step up to the plate to organize monthly service projects for our

middle school students. Our students have formed great relationships with families at the Ronald McDonald House and the Hearth Community.

We are always looking for more help on the core team whether it be for planning our weekly youth group activities or service projects. So get in contact with us if you are interested! And keep an eye out in the upcoming bulletins for news about our summer events.

ENCOUNTER: This past year the high school youth ministry program has taken the name “Encounter.” Our focus has been two fold. First, looking to “Encounter” Jesus in all that we do; second, that we may live so that people may “Encounter” Jesus in us through daily interactions. Whether it has been at our twice-a-month youth group, our service projects, fall retreat, Road to Emmaus nights of worship

and adoration, or spring retreat both our core team has witnessed the teens truly live out this theme of “Encountering.” They are so inspiring.

We are looking forward to an exciting summer; we will be continuing our popular tradition of breakfast club (morning Mass, breakfast and discussion together), evening bonfires, as well as heading off to serve the poor and build up the community in Champagne, IL through Catholic Heart Work Camp. Keep an eye out for our upcoming summer schedule!

And just as with the IGNITE, we are always looking for more people to help out on our high school core team. Passing on the faith is one of the best gifts you can give to someone, especially a high school teen, so please, consider volunteering to be on our core team. You won’t regret it.

Connor Flanagan

ST. PEREGRINE LAZIOSI

Born in Forli, Italy, Peregrine is the patron saint of persons suffering from cancer, AIDS and other serious diseases.

As a young man he was a member of an anti-papal party until he encountered St. Philip Benizi, the head of the Servite order, who had been sent to try to reconcile the divided community. While trying to preach in Forli, Philip was heckled and even struck by Peregrine, who was overcome by momentary political fervor. But that moment also changed Peregrine. He began to channel his energies in new directions, engaged in good works and eventually joined the Servites in Siena and went on to be ordained a priest. Returning to his

home town, he founded a new Servite house there and became well known for his preaching and holiness as well as his devotion to the sick and poor.

One of the special penances he imposed on himself was standing whenever it was not necessary to sit. Over time, Peregrine developed varicose veins and, in turn, cancer of the foot. The wound became painful and diseased and all medical treatment failed. The local surgeon determined amputation of the leg was called for.

Tradition has it that the night before surgery was scheduled, Peregrine spent much time in prayer before the cruci-

fied Jesus, asking God to heal him if it was God's will to do so. Falling asleep at one point, Peregrine had a vision of the crucified Jesus leaving the cross and touching his cancerous leg. When Peregrine awoke, the wound was healed and his foot and leg, seemingly miraculously cured, were saved. He lived another 20 years. Peregrine was canonized in 1726.

Luanne Radermacher

Catholic saints are holy people and human people who lived extraordinary lives. Each saint the Church honors responded to God's invitation to use his or her unique gifts. God calls each one of us to be a saint.

ANNULMENT - A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

The word, annulment, is one of those words that can stir up a number of emotions in people, some which are positive and some which are negative. The point of this article is to help dispel rumors, clarify misconceptions, and promote understanding.

To start, I want to let you know why I know a little bit about this topic. I am an Advocate. My role is to help the person seeking an annulment through the process.

That person is called the Petitioner. He/she is asking the church to investigate their marriage, because they believe that one of the basic elements necessary for a marriage to be considered valid, was not in place at the time vows were exchanged.

You see, the church -- regardless of whether or not the marriage was between two Catholics or two non-Catholics, two baptized or two non-baptized -- believes that when two people consent through an exchange of vows, they want to commit themselves to the other per-

son for life. AND that both people are approaching that moment, clearly understanding the essential elements of what they are signing up for.

And so, information about the case is presented to a judge in the court of the Catholic Church, called the Tribunal. The Tribunal makes a decision based on Church law (Canon Law), about whether or not the facts support the Petitioner's claim that some essential element was not in place.

The outcome of the annulment process has no bearing on the legitimacy of the children born from that marriage. Also, if a person is in the process of getting an annulment, or is divorced and not going through the annulment process and has not remarried, they are welcome to receive Holy Communion, Reconciliation, and any other sacraments of the Church.

Contrary to urban legend, how much money a person has or doesn't have has no impact on how quickly an annul-

ment is completed. The fee is the fee: it is \$650. BUT the Tribunal has been known to waive part of the fee if the

Petitioner cannot afford the full cost.

The annulment process is not an easy one, but it

can lead to feelings of healing, peace, and consolation. If you have a friend, relative, or if you yourself want to know more about the process or have any specific questions, email me (deaconrick-sjn@gmail.com) or call me at 412-366-2020, ext. 16.

May God continue to lead each of us through our own faith journey and give us the courage and strength to transition our lives in ways that allow His love to become more clear to us each day.

Deacon Rick Caruso



TRANSITIONS IN RETIREMENT AND BUILDING ON FAITH

Each person in the SJN community brings his/her own faith to their lives and the lives of others. In retirement, there are transitions to what may be different roles. Here are the stories of four parishioners who have taken varied paths. Each could be a separate, more detailed story.

Rich Byrnes spent 31 years working at healthcare companies such as CR Bard & Baxter Healthcare – specialty anesthesia & critical care/drug delivery and still does some consulting.

Rich was recruited in 2011 to volunteer at Vincentian Regency. “I wanted to give back. I had to put my mom in a similar facility in Virginia where she received good care. Vincentian was a good fit and comfort zone.” Rich does the “fun stuff” such as bingo/Wii games like bowling/Texas Hold’em card games, and an occasional travelogue two or three days a week. “The Wii bowling is great for resident hand/eye coordination. Really cool is that they improve week after week.”

“My satisfaction is the joy the residents experience with the activity and the interaction with them. Many have a great story to tell. There are many times I feel they are ministering to me more than I am to them. To be where they are in the banquet of life and what they contend with is inspiring. One day I pray I will have the acceptance and determination they display. I am willing to talk with anyone who might be interested in volunteering.”

He and his wife Mardy, who is an elementary school teacher, have two children and three grandchildren. Other activities include: attending daily Mass, helping a parishioner with errands, Renew, travel, cooking dinner for his wife, and being an avid sports fan.

Meet Judy Robertson, a former social

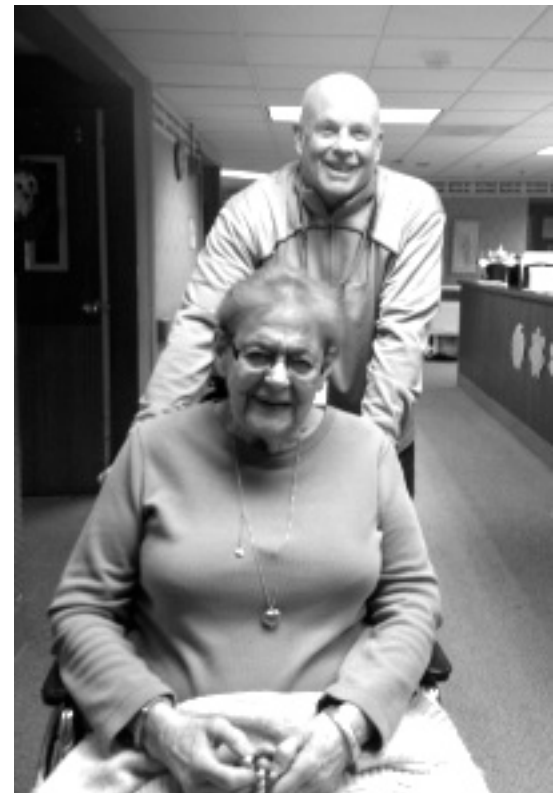
worker, who supervised the alcohol/other drug prevention program for Mercy Behavioral Health. Her team facilitated self-development groups for children and youth affected by addiction in the Pittsburgh Public Schools and others including North Allegheny. She earlier worked in foster care. In retirement, Judy and her husband Jim became Red Cross volunteers at the scene of fires/other disasters, offering assistance to victims. In 2006 she worked for three weeks in New Orleans as a mental health worker, going into the streets to talk with people following the hurricane. When the SJN Katrina Project crew traveled to repair housing in Mississippi, she and Jim joined them on three different occasions.

Not stopping there, Judy is a member of Pittsburgh’s Critical Incident Stress Management Team and serves on its board. They offer support to emergency personnel during and after a critical incident. She volunteers at HEARTH, a transitional housing program for women and children in Shaler Township. She also values her SJN Renew Group and a women’s book club.

Judy and Jim spend time with the Pittsburgh Paddlefish Dragon Boat Team, based on the Allegheny River at Millvale. Besides their own paddling, they help coordinate and coach a dragon boat team of youth, ages 12-18. She has competed in races in Malaysia and Hungary (with Jim). Most of all, she says they enjoy visiting with their four children, eleven grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Retirees Bob and Marilyn Sproule have their own unique stories. Bob spent 35 years in group life and health insurance, the last 22 with Highmark Blue

Cross Blue Shield. Marilyn spent 34 years in the financial services industry with half of those years managing a regional office for MAC/STAR ATM. Upon retiring, they started volunteering with the Highmark Caring Place to work with young children and teens brought together following the death of a loved one. A group session covers 20 weeks



Rich Byrnes with patient Lois Wolff

and they do two a year as well as other related activities. Bob says, “With the training and tools you are given, you can have a positive effect on a young kid’s life and I would encourage anyone to look into this volunteer opportunity.” Marilyn adds, “My level of compassion and caring has grown through the Caring Place. You see some of the saddest situations and do mature as an individual.”

Bob is also a docent at the Senator John Heinz History Center, serves as

Why Do We Do That?



*Stand up, sit down,
bow, genuflect, kneel –
When? Where? Why?*

As Catholic Christians there is a reason behind our movements when we enter our churches and during our liturgies. There is a very long history of how movements have been introduced and accepted as practice. (Because of space constraints I won't get into the history here, but you can certainly research for yourself.) It may be helpful to give these actions a defining purpose:

Stand – attitude of praise & thanksgiving or way to express joy

Bow – acknowledgment of God's presence

Genuflect – a more demonstrative acknowledgment of God's presence

Kneel - a profession of dependence and deep reverence

Prostrate – lowering oneself as much as possible in an act of humility

Let's start with WHY.

God's presence should be an awesome experience for us, which provokes us to respond in the utmost respectful way – bowing, genuflecting, kneeling and laying prostrate. We could think of

RETIREMENT (CONT'D)

president of the Highmark Retiree Club, and is in the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Society for Baseball Research.

He finds all a great opportunity to meet people and make friends that he might never have known. He writes a blog "The Grandstander" about sports, movies and books. Marilyn is finishing her third year of teaching Good Shepherd First Level. "I love the little ones!" She likes to cook for Miryam's shelter every

these movements as reflective of the more visible or heartfelt presence of God, spurring us to a more demonstrative movement.

WHERE and WHEN do we do this?

Most Catholic churches have the tabernacle in the sanctuary off to one side of the altar. So, as we enter and spend time in a Catholic church our actions should reflect our acknowledgment of God's presence.

As we enter the SJN narthex we are immediately in God's presence as we pass the tabernacle in the chapel. Walking by the tabernacle without any acknowledgment would be akin to walking by a friend without a wave, saying hello or stopping to greet him or her. At the least a bow to acknowledge God's presence is called for. If we were approaching the tabernacle (either SJN's chapel or another church's sanctuary area), we are even closer to God's real presence and to genuflect would be appropriate.

At SJN we pass through the narthex to enter the main church, which does not have the tabernacle, but does hold the altar where the consecration takes place. Respect for what the altar

month, is active in their homeowners association, and the Passavant Hospital "No One Dies Alone" program. Her calendar includes: The Public Theater, two book clubs, Bible study, and she taught Sunday School at her Lutheran church before joining SJN through the RCIA program.

While Rich, Judy, Bob and Marilyn have taken these paths, others are immersed in care giving for grandchildren,

signifies should provoke us to bow in acknowledgment.

Generally, when we say genuflect, we mean one knee. There are circumstances that we might want our genuflection to be a stronger acknowledgment of God's presence. One such instance is when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on the altar and the genuflection before entering the pew should be on two knees.

Think of what our movements are during the Eucharistic liturgy. We stand to indicate praise and thanksgiving when we begin, at the reading of the Gospel, and professing our faith through the creed. We kneel in deep reverence at the consecration and before and during reception of the precious body and blood of Jesus. We bow or genuflect in reverence as we receive Christ's body and blood.

Most of us have never been in a situation in which we prostrated (lain face down on the floor) ourselves. I do it every time I clean under the couch, but I don't think that qualifies! We would witness this when men are ordained as deacons and priests.

Now you know why, so it's up to you make your move and do it with meaning!

Clare Browne

other family members or neighbors. Retirees may volunteer in schools, hospitals, food banks, relief agencies, shelters as well as take classes, exercise and enjoy reading, crafts or woodworking to name a few. Still others reach out to people in Appalachia and disaster areas. Faith can be lived in many places. Look around!

Sarah Schneider

*"I wanted to
give back."*



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