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Small

Fr. Randy Roche

Loyola Marymount University

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Small

Christmas cards we receive in the mail come in different sizes. While the larger cards can present bigger images, we will likely remember one card more readily than another because of the message conveyed rather than by reason of whether one card is larger or smaller than another.

In a different context, we might think that size does matter when we think, for example, of donations to charitable causes, where larger sums are of more value than smaller amounts. At least in their effects it would seem to be true. But it is possible to give a large gift to the poor with little concern for the recipients, or a small gift with more care. Different sets of values are involved, just as larger Christmas cards as compared to smaller ones are valued differently from the kinds of messages – personal or impersonal – that might be contained in either small or large cards.

Some people think of the period from Thanksgiving through Christmas as burdensome when they consider all the extra demands on their time, and perhaps on their finances. Another perspective, quite as real, but more positive, focuses on one small event, one session of writing notes or one phone call at a time rather than the possibly overwhelming thought of the sum of all of them together. Today, and every day, even an extremely busy day, takes place one moment at a time. If we pause before beginning the day's activities, we can choose an attitude or a perspective for doing each small act of listening or doing, as a gift that we give gladly, rather than a series of obligations to be shouldered until the day is finally done.

Many of the material things in life that we esteem highly are small, such as a wedding band, a hand-held electronic device or a photo of someone we love. Even more, our experiences of small favors given or received, little signs of sincere respect and daily inspirations are often of great worth to us. The small things that we do and can do are of great value, whereas we accomplish little in reality if we focus primarily on either the particulars of what we might like to do or the sum of all that we wish to accomplish.

"Small" refers, at least implicitly, to comparison with something larger or of more importance. If we reflect on the immensity of the created universe, we are very, very small. But our God-given value as humans is not measured in terms of size, but rather by how we exercise our capacity to love. We are all capable of giving many small, but more valuable gifts than planets, stars and galaxies, through thoughtful words or gestures, or choosing kind thoughts in place of judgmental or negative ones. We did not create this system of values whereby the proverbial gift of a "cup of water to one of these least ones" counts for more than any sum of money or any

physical part of creation. Only God, who is love, could (and did) so arrange our place within creation.

“Small is beautiful” when it comes from the heart.