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COME SPIRIT!!

5 Easter B-2003 THEME: Mary and Molly, an Experience of Christ.

Mary Johnson loved her new job, her first job. She had graduated college six months earlier majoring in social work and hoped to find employment as a counselor. After a number of unsuccessful interviews, an agency in a Big City up north hired her to work the phones and occasionally visit some of the elderly poor confined to apartments in the city. It wasn't exactly what Mary trained for, four days a week she sat in an office calling fifty clients, making sure they had food, heat, took their medicine, arranging transportation to the doctor, etc. One day a week, though, she was able to leave the office and visit the people. With fifty clients, she only could see people once a month, but it was something. It was also a day she enjoyed.

Except when she had to visit Molly McPherson. Molly was not nice. In fact she was downright nasty and sometimes even rude. "They send me a kid with her pretty smile and empty mind and think that I should be pleased, and then you say you can't stay too long because you have others to see. Well, don't bother with me. I didn't ask you to come." It was an absolute struggle for Mary to knock on Molly's door. Mary was an active Catholic and would often share her feelings with her pastor. One day the priest said to her, "Charity is not always easy. It sometime carries a price we would rather not pay. But you are still doing the work of Christ, even in Molly rejects it and you."

One day at the end of January the temperature had raised up to forty-five degrees, the January thaw. Mary visited Molly and decided to use this to try to get off on a pleasant foot.

"It sure is nice outside, Molly. Why don't you take a stroll before winter kicks in again." That just started Molly up again. "What

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you think that just because you have a coat and scarf and gloves, that everyone can go outside. I haven't been out since November. Here's why." Then Molly took out a coat that was so threadbare it couldn't even serve much use as a blanket. "Why don't you just go back to your fantasy land. I've had enough of you for today." As I said, Molly was not nice. Mary went to the Church in tears and asked God to help her not be bitter to the elderly lady.

The next day was Mary's pay day, a whole \$463. She could barely pay her rent and food out of that. Mary cashed her check and then she had a wonderful thought. She thought about Molly. She put \$200 in an envelope, and sent it anonymously to the bitter old lady with a note, please buy yourself a winter coat. Four days later the agency received a letter addressed to young Mary. The letter contained \$50 and read, "I know that you must have sent me the money, because no one else knew about my coat. I'm sorry for being so mean. I was able to find a coat for \$150. Please give the other \$50 to someone else who has needs. Looking forward to your next visit, Love, Molly."

Mary thought that Molly sure could have used that extra \$50. She also thought that Molly could have continued her mean streak, but instead she wanted to be generous to someone. On an infinitely deeper level Molly had been touched by the love of Christ. Now this love was flowing through her and needed to touch someone else.

We hear the message of the vine and the branches every year at Easter time. Most of the time we priests and deacons dwell on the negative aspect of the message, that if we sever ourselves from the vine, the Lord's life will not flow through us.

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But how about the positive message? We have God's life, God's love within us. When we reach out to care for others, even the mean old Molly's of the world, or of our family, then others come in contact with the Love of Christ. The Love of Christ, flowing into them now needs to flow through them to others.

Jesus used the vine and the branches analogy during the Great Discourse on the Last Supper in the Gospel of John. It was sort of his last will and testament before dying. He wanted his disciples and all of us to carry on the work of the Kingdom by continuing his love for others.

What really matters in our lives? Is it the way others have treated us? Often that motivates us, at least me, and I want to return negative for negative. But what others say and do is really secondary to what really matters in life. What matters is the Love of Christ that we have been empowered to make real in the world. When that love becomes our focus, then we really don't care about anything other than allowing others to experience this love.

During Easter time we celebrate the gift of the Lord's life we received at Baptism. Today we are reminded that this life is not ours to hoard, but to share with others. In this way we join the Lord in waging the battle of and for the Kingdom of God.