

SERMON
December 17, 2006
3 Advent C

A few weeks ago we invited Lynette Kristine to speak at Adult Forum.

Lynette is the volunteer coordinator for Siuslaw Outreach Services (SOS),
and we wanted to hear about the work that SOS does in Florence.

SOS is the center for social services in Florence.

If you are in crisis, you come to SOS.

If you are traveling through and you run out of gas and money, you come to SOS.

If you need help with your electric bill, you go to SOS for the LEAP program.

If you need a restraining order from an abusive spouse, you go to SOS.

It used to be called the Women's Center

because it was originally founded to help women in crisis situations,

but it changed its name to SOS

because it now provides services to families, men, and children
as well as to women.

As you may know, my Habitat office is located in the SOS building,

so I see and hear a lot that goes on at SOS.

Lynette came to Adult Forum and she began by telling her own personal story.

She said she grew up with a love for music

and she played the string bass during college

and afterwards in orchestras.

But when she got married,

she left all that behind when she and her husband moved to in isolated area
near Triangle Lake.

They lived there for 25 years

and she became increasingly cut off from the outside world.

Her husband isolated her from outside contact
so he could control her and the family.

She endured it until she began to fear for her daughter.

Then she knew she had to leave.

But her husband had control over everything –
the car, the money, all their resources.

And she didn't know anyone outside their small community.

Well, Lynette is a strong person.

She took her children and she left.

She knew she had to leave completely and totally.

If her husband had a chance, he'd drag them back.

She knew one couple in Junction City who put them up for a few days.

She called Womenspace,

a crisis shelter in Eugene for women in situations like hers,
and Womenspace helped her put her life back together.

She had to totally start from scratch.

All that she and her children had were the clothes they wore when they left.

They had no money, no car, no clothes, no food, no friends, no contacts.

Womenspace found them an apartment to live in and helped them with the rent.

So they had a roof over their head.

But they had no clothes, no laundry detergent, no bath soap, no towels.

They had to gather everything needed for living.

Womenspace took them to a place where there were free clothes,
so they had something to change into.

Womenspace took them to Food for Lane County so they had something to eat;
to Goodwill, where they got some pots and pans to cook with.

Lynette had to learn how to cope in a busy city.

She had to learn how to use public transportation.

She had to find a job and learn how to handle money –
all the things she hadn't done before.

She also needed counseling.

She had been so controlled and so limited
that she hardly knew how to make decisions for herself.

Her sense of self-worth and self-esteem had to be restored.

And Womenspace made that possible, too,
as well as counseling for her children.

Today Lynette is a changed person.

She is vibrant, energetic, self-confident.

She's playing music again,
playing the string bass in local orchestras and drama.

She's self-employed as a relaxation therapist and
she works for SOS because she believes in what they do.

She says, "SOS is doing in Florence what Womenspace does in Eugene,
and I personally can tell you how important SOS is to this community."

What if there had been no Womenspace in Eugene?

What if there had been no help for her
when she was lost and confused about what to do?
Lynette's story shows how important crisis centers are.

In today's Gospel, John the baptist called people to repentance.

He said, "Bear fruit worthy of repentance."

In other words, when you repent, there ought to be some fruit that shows.
There ought to be some practical results, not just an inward change of heart.

And people actually listened.

They took the message to heart, and they said, "What then should we do?"

They wanted to know what practical actions they could take to show their repentance.

"What should we do?"

John replied by saying, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none."

Now, that's very practical.

It's very obvious when you have two coats on
and the person next to you has no coat and is shivering.
John says, "Take off your coat and give it to the other person."
Simple.

In our community there are people who don't have enough
and there are people who have more than enough.

And there are organizations and agencies and ministries
to help those who don't have enough.

Florence Food Share gives food to those who don't have enough.

The Free Lunch program feeds people who wouldn't eat otherwise.

Habitat for Humanity helps become homeowners who otherwise would be able to.

Our Angel Tree ministry, our Turkey Shoot, the Alzheimer's program –
these are all ministries that do what John the Baptist said to do.
We support SOS monthly through our Discretionary Fund budget
and through the CoPay Prescription fund.

John the Baptist was talking about inequality –
the fact that some people have too much,
and some people don't have enough.

The mission of the church is to keep this fact in front of the public eye
so that we can find ways to change it.

The role of the church historically
has been to minister to the sick, the hungry and the needy
and to find ways to address injustice.

And so we commit ourselves to a continual repentance
That we demonstrate in our ministries to help people.

“Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none.”