

INSIGHTS ON FAITH & GIVING

We hit send too soon and corrections have been made to the newsletter that went out earlier today. We apologize for our error.

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Lake Institute on Faith & Giving

MISSION: to foster a greater understanding of the ways in which faith both inspires and promotes giving by providing knowledge, education, and training.

The Center on Philanthropy

MISSION: to increase the understanding of philanthropy and improve its practice worldwide.

Contact Us

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Director

Generosity Across the Religious Traditions

The mission of the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving is to explore the multiple connections between faith and philanthropy within the major religious traditions. Last month we co-sponsored a lively and interactive conversation alongside Christian Theological Seminary, The Center for Interfaith Cooperation and China Philanthropy Leadership Initiative. The IndyTalks program titled *Becoming an International Humanitarian Incubator*, included a panel moderated by Aimée Laramore, Associate Director of the Lake Institute. The panel shared their story as to how their cultural heritage and religious faith shaped their attitudes and practices of giving. When asked, "What does generosity mean to you?" these were some of the panelists thoughts.

Arishaa Khan (Pakistan, Muslim): Generosity comes from the desire to give one's treasured time or talent to another. I think generosity is the acceptance and appreciation of one's own existence, as you try to better someone else's quality of life. Generosity can be selfless as, oftentimes, there is nothing one is receiving in return for giving. The concept of generosity is both innate and learned; one's upbringing defines a lifestyle just as much as one's surrounding. It's not necessary to have a bountiful pool of resources to give; rather all that's needed is the desire to give of what you do have. One may not be able to donate large amounts of money, but simply giving valuable time and efforts to humanity with hopes of bettering lives is generosity.

The concept itself is rather basic - give of yourself what you can. However, the effect is what's remarkable. Generosity can simply bring a smile to someone's face just as much as it can bring groups of diverse minded people together in harmony. The simple gesture of generosity can go quite a long way.

Ming Hu (China): First, generosity is to love oneself. To love self is not to merely get what one wants, but to live one's fullest life: To tap one's utmost potential, to liberate one's mind and body so as to be free from fear and illness, and finally to reach self-esteem and internal freedom. Loving oneself is the prerequisite to truly love others. If one cannot love himself or herself, one will not understand the true meaning of love and love becomes an exchangeable good. One loves with the purpose of being rewarded in some form.

Second, generosity is to love others. Our lives are completed through others. Generosity is to share our lives with others and help each other to live fully. And last but not least, generosity means being humble. Too much pride leads to self-importance and the feeling of being different from or more or less excellent over others. Pride cannot feed generosity. Being humble means one understands the vulnerability of individuals and the need of interdependence.

Chris Smith (Indianapolis, Christian): Generosity is the virtue of being willing to

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share ourselves with others, and it takes many forms: lending a listening ear, visiting the sick, inviting others to share a meal, sharing monetary and non-monetary resources. Anyone can be generous; one does not need to have extensive wealth in order to share generously with others. We learn to be generous in communities where generosity abounds, as we learn to follow in the footsteps of other generous friends. Our faith communities, for instance, offer a prime opportunity for us to nurture generosity as we give and receive compassionately with each other. Generosity also abounds in nature - consider the apple tree that not only abundantly shares its fruit, but also shares its branches with a host of birds and insects - and is essential to healthy and flourishing places. May we all grow deeper daily in our generosity, and may our communities flourish!

Aimée Laramore (Indianapolis, Christian): My understanding of generosity has been shaped by faith and family. My great-grandmother, grandmother, mother and aunts are all women of tremendous faith, and they lived their lives in intentional ways to make a difference for others. I consider my life an important part of their legacy. Serving as a representative for Lake Institute, I have had the pleasure of working alongside many different people, as they work to understand how their philanthropy has been shaped by their personal beliefs, faith tradition and a lifetime of experiences.

IndyTalks offered an opportunity to encourage the entire audience to reflect on their understanding of philanthropy. We all use different words and terms to describe our personal experiences, but universally, faith, upbringing and cultures have been an essential part of our development. Generosity is living a life focused on making a difference, one life, one experience, one action at a time.

Visit [IndyTalks](#) for a summary of the program and for more information on the panel.

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