The practice of "allthereness"

By Chaplain Barry A. Metzger

We are bombarded with incredible amounts of stimuli all the time. It seems the world is literally in the palm of our hands with the World Wide Web readily available in many hand held devices. There are consequences to the incredible pace of post-modern society. Courtesy and consideration tend to become casualties if we are not careful.

When you think about it, the issues we confront for the most part are not large scale matters such as murder or wide spread corruption. We do however, continually face ethical questions such as, "Shall I keep my word?" or "Can I honor my commitments?"

I realize we live and work in professional environments where courtesies and manners may seem to be more prevalent at least in work settings. At the same time, if we are not careful in our day to day living we can lose sight of the small issues of manners and proper daily ethical behavior. This is exemplified by the fact that we make it a point to recognize such things as children saying, "Please" and "thank you" or when we see someone helping another person in practical times of need.

The same question can be asked of us that Jesus in the Christian tradition asked his disciples over and over again: "What do you [do] more than others?" We know we have lost some of our sensitivity when the most considerate encounter we have all day is an automatic teller machine personally thanking us for our transaction. Think about it for a minute, we live in a day where the last place one expects service is at a service station.

Lelita Baldrige, former chief of staff for Jackie Kennedy, in her book entitled "*The new Manners for the 90s*" states "Manners, etiquette and rules of behavior are an expression of how you treat others when you care about them, their self-esteem and their feelings. Manners are under your control because they come from the heart. In a chaotic world, they give you the power to bring pleasure into other people's lives."

We're talking about a way to contrast our frantic, sometimes unfocused rush through life with a simple ideal; a phrase Quaker theologian Douglas Steere, calls "allthereness." This is what I desire to strive for, to be all there.

Taking this idea a step further, there was an old directive among the early Franciscan Third-Order of lay Christians. The giving of alms, or the equivalent of our weekly offering, was inadequate. Members were to find ways in which they could mix their bodies and their personal service, with their alms. And so, at the leper hutch at Rivo Toro, St. Francis not only brought food but he dressed the leper's sores. The idea is to be personally present where you are, to always search for fresh ways to show our willingness to mix our soul into other people's needs and hurts.

It's not easy but I am more inclined to be "all there" when I consider the fact that I am striving to imitate God, the God whose "allthereness" has been evident so many times in my own life. I believe that "allthereness" makes us relevant to those around us.

Celebrating NASW National Professional Social Work Month

By Lt. Jaclyn Fischer, CFAY Fleet and Family Support Center

In every community, there are people who go above and beyond at work to make a significant difference in the lives of thousands. These advocates can come from every discipline, but many times they are social workers.

Social workers often work in positions and organizations that allow them to see the full impact of a larger social problem in a community. Many are driven to launch and lead efforts that address the root of such problems. These dedicated individuals are who the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) seeks to honor in March during National Professional Social Work Month.

NASW Executive Director Elizabeth J. Clark says that the 2010 social work month theme, "Social workers inspire community action," underscores the association's focus this year on leadership development. "We have so many inspiring leaders to look to in our profession's history as we plan for the future," Clark said. "Others may think and talk about problems, but social workers do something to change the systems that perpetuate them [and] help Americans succeed."

One such person is National Council of Negro Women Chair and President Emerita Dr. Dorothy I. Height, a social work pioneer and one of the most recognized civil rights leaders in the United States. Height worked directly with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., fellow social worker Whitney M. Young Jr. and others to enact the 1964 Civil Rights Act. She also helped open YWCA clubs to girls of all backgrounds.

A documentary of Height's life from the Stony Brook University School of Social Work is in production and both the House and Senate versions of the Social Work Reinvestment Act bear her name and that of former NASW President Whitney Young.

Stories of social work leaders are published every day in newspapers and sometimes become TV news segments, magazine features and popular blog posts. However, these profiles only show a small fraction of the positive changes created by social workers in all communities.

For example, at the Fleet and Family Support Center, located in the Community Readiness Center, there are several licensed clinical social workers who provide a multitude of services to the local community. These social workers strive to create awareness and enhance each individual's ability to cope with and successfully manage problems in their lives, which positively impacts mission and family readiness across the board.

Professional social workers are on the frontlines, responding to human needs such as homelessness, poverty, family break-up, mental illness, physical and mental disability, alcohol and substance abuse, domestic violence and much more. They also know that helping people and families navigate difficult life transitions may require "changing the map" through community action.