



***But do not do what they do,  
for they do not practice what they preach.***

One night, I sat with a close friend drinking inexpensive port and eating blue saga cheese on dark, rich gingersnaps. My friend asked me a question which impressed me. He asked “What do you believe?” The fire was roaring and the meal recently eaten was nestling into my gut. I could suddenly feel my scalp. Every nerve ending seemed to be alive – waiting in anticipation of what I was about to say.

I tried to stall by saying rather priestly-like: “I believe a lot of things!” I silently hoped that was a good answer. It was deemed by my guest unacceptable with a small smirk and a look out the tops of his eyes. “Damn!” I thought.

I took another long drag on my cheap port and went over to my desk. It occurred to me that whatever I say was going to be either shallow or pious, stilted or pock-marked with false humility. Nothing I could think of saying told the story of what I believe. I could quote scripture, but I was sitting with a theologian whose knowledge was greater than mine. I could draw on the church mothers and fathers, but that would be so sanctimonious that my old friend would just giggle.

I drew a small book from the desk and sat down again. He said, “Well....So ...what do you believe?”

Kai, my black lab, had awoken from his snooze and looked at me. He seemed interested. He had this bone-eating grin on his face. One eyebrow was up. It was annoying. He added to the pressure.

I said, “I love God and I love my friends and the people I know and meet and serve. At least I try to, every day.” And that is true. I do love people and I do love God.

I then placed my check-book on the table. He did not pick it up. He did not look in it at the register of checks I had written that month. He could have, but he didn't. We both understood what I was saying. We both knew that the proof of what I believe is in my check book. As one looks at my checks, one can see that I give a chunk of money to the church and another big chunk is spent on food for the many friends who come to my home for dinner. One can also see that I buy a lot of clay and chemicals for glazes, and gas for the pottery kiln.

My check-book is the theological statement in my life which states what I believe. It never lies. My speech can lie, but my checkbook never does.



*The Rev. Charles La Fond*  
Canon Steward, St. John's Cathedral  
The Episcopal Diocese of Colorado

*Reflection Questions*

- How does giving profess what you believe?
- How does your checkbook reflect your values?
- How does giving shape your walk with God?

