



GFASC – Missionary Year – Reflection 4

To serve your neighbor lovingly, freely, and joyfully

(To love is my mission)

What does it mean to serve? Pope Francis responded to this question during his visit to “Centro Astalli” on September 10, 2013: “Serving means giving an attentive welcome to a person who arrives. It means bending over those in need and stretching out a hand to them, without calculation, without fear, but with tenderness and understanding, just as Jesus knelt to wash the Apostles’ feet. Serving means working beside the neediest of people, establishing with them first and foremost human relationships of closeness and bonds of solidarity.”

Word of God - Luke 12: 35-38

Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master’s return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants.

John 13: 2-5; 12-15

The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. ... So when he had washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them,

“Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.

Pope Francis – Service and gratuitousness. These are the fundamental characteristics that must accompany the Christian “on the road,” that “movement” that distinguishes our life, “because a Christian cannot stand still.”

... The Christian life is live gratuitously. “Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.” “You can’t buy salvation,” because God “saves free of charge,” the Pope reminds us. He emphasizes that God “saves us free of charge” and “requires no payment.” As God has done for us, so we are to do with others. This gratuitousness of God “is one of the most beautiful things.” (*from Homily at Santa Marta, June 11, 2019*)

Love is not a word, it is a deed, a service; humble service, hidden and silent, like Jesus said himself: “do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Mt 6:3). ... When you can forget yourself and think of others, this is love! And with the washing of feet the Lord teaches us to be servants, and more: to serve as he has served us, each and every one of us. (*Jubilee Audience, March 12, 2016*)

Blessed Clelia Merloni



Mother Clelia was sure that the mission of Jesus is to go in search of the lost sheep of His fold and lead them back to the Father. It is not an effort for the Lord but a need He has to seek out sinners. Indeed, His joy is to fill them with love, to bind their wounds and surround them with forgiveness. (*Diary, p. 54*)

[Charity] transforms everything, placing it in harmony with God: from torment to peace, from desperation to hope, from sorrow to joy. (*Diary, p. 58*)

“My goal is to serve God, to do His most holy Will; it is right, then, that I choose what God wants, not what I myself want.” (*Diary*, 199)

“O how happy I would be if I could see you animated by a holy zeal, by an ardent desire to spread out over the whole earth to make God loved and praised everywhere, saying with St. Francis Xavier: ‘As long as I know of one corner of the earth where God is not loved, I cannot enjoy one moment of rest!’” (*Spiritual Anthology*, p. 175, 3.10; Mg. I, p. 100)

“Practice charity with a kind and peaceful countenance, with an affable manner, with gentle and cordial speech; be indulgent in the use of charity, always taking the good side and interpreting everything told to you favorably, excusing others even at your own expense, as much as prudence permits. You shouldn’t show any discontent over your neighbor’s coarseness or weakness; you should lovingly and kindly accept whatever advice or reproofs there are; keep watch over your words and your behavior so that you may do nothing or say anything that could be displeasing. Try to say and do amiably all that your conscience permits.” (*Spiritual Anthology*, p. 88-89, 3.2; Mg. II, p. 107)

“Commit yourself wholeheartedly to do everything with the greatest perfection, seeing the image of God in your neighbor, whoever he is: in the poor and the sick; even in persons full of defects, so that these might become, in your eyes, the object of your most tender care, to the point of feeling the joy of rendering good for evil and bearing everything, forgiving everything, of loving always, even when hated by others.” (*Spiritual Anthology*, p. 98, 3.2; Mg. I, pp.34-35)

The cotton thread (Bruno Ferrero)

Once there was a cotton thread that felt useless. “I am too weak to make a cord,” she lamented. “And I am too short to make a shirt. I am too clumsy for a kite and I can’t even be used for a cheap piece of embroidery. I am faded and have split ends. Ah, if I were gold thread, I would adorn a stole, I would be on the shoulders of a prelate! I am no use at all. I am a failure. Nobody likes me, and I don’t even like myself!”

She curled up on a chair, listened to sad music, and was always alone. One day she met a lump of wax and he said to her, "Don't put yourself down this way, little cotton thread. I have an idea: let's make something together, the two of us! For sure we can't become an altar or a parlor lamp. You are too short and I am too small. We can become a tea light and give a little bit of warmth and a little bit of light. It's better to give a little bit of warmth and a little bit of light than to grumble in the dark." The cotton thread accepted willingly. United to the wax, she became a tea light; she shone in the dark and spread warmth. And she was so happy.

Sharing

- *"To love is my mission."! What does the short story teach us?*
 - *In my family, my work, my parish, and in my group, what witness can I give of service to others?*
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Pledge

- Today I will find an opportunity to serve my neighbor with the greatest love and joy possible, even before I am asked.
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Let us pray with Mother Clelia

"O my Jesus, my joy, my comfort, may we always remain together. Let the raging tempests of tribulations howl around me, and let the lightning and thunder of preoccupations swirl around my head. Leaning on Your heart, I will not fear the tribulations. Let us always stay together. In this union I will find my joy, my happiness."

(Diary, pp. 159-160)

"God is infinite LOVE!"

