

IDEA OF THE MONTH

July 2023

"Nothing is small if it is done with love." ⁱ

Every person can make a contribution to building fraternity wherever they are: even if we are "small" and don't seem to have any special qualities or titles, we are always able to show concrete, practical love to those around us.

At different times, we have all received attention, care or forgiveness from other people; all of us can give something to others so that they can experience the tenderness of gestures of fraternity that can change our lives.

Chiara Lubich always told us that it does not matter whether we have much to give or very little. What matters is **how** we give, how much love we put into a small action that shows care for others. Sometimes just offering a glass of water is enough. If this is done with love, it can mark the beginning of a new relationship that changes the lives of the giver and the receiver.

Let us rediscover the value of "how" to carry out our actions - work around the house or in the fields, dealing with office paperwork, relationships with fellow students and responsibilities in the civic, political and religious spheres.

Everything we do can be transformed into attentive and valuable service that can help heal conflict, remove injustice, fulfill basic human rights and create relationships of fraternal communion and sharing. We will have new eyes to see what others really need and be able to help in creative and generous ways. Reciprocity will form the basis of our lives: talents will circulate and joy in us will increase because "there is more joy in giving than in receiving."

This requires approaching everyone with an open and generous heart and overcoming our prejudices and judgements because they are the cause of conflict and create division in society.

In this way, active and responsible collaboration for the common good, starting from the small things of every day, will begin to happen in the areas around us.

Manuel's experience from Australia is significant: "I left my job in the Philippines and went to Australia to be with my family. There I found work at a construction site as a cleaner and was responsible for the food hall, locker rooms and offices. It was very different from the work I had done before as an engineer.

Initially, I had to take a step within in not to become disheartened and frustrated. Certain that "nothing is small if it is done out of love," I realized that every job can be carried out with dignity if we have a genuine attitude of service for the people who pass us by.

From then onwards, the cafeteria where I met a multitude of people every day, became my little construction site where I could build "that world united in fraternity" that had been the ideal of my life for some time.

I was discovering the importance and beauty of "serving." Handing out trays or clearing them away at the end of the meal, sweeping the floor and putting everything in order were small practical acts of love for those who used the cafeteria every day.

It was this realization that changed me: yes, I was no longer an engineer building houses or roads, but an engineer helping to make that public service efficient and dignified for those who frequented it.

When I met with aggressive or indifferent behaviour, I tried not to judge but understand the needs of those around me. I kept my cool and did not lose patience.

Each day was a new adventure, and gradually I noticed that I felt fulfilled, and it seemed the atmosphere in the cafeteria became more serene and there was greater harmony.

To my surprise, new relationships developed; some people became friends, and these people even helped me tidy up at the end of mealtimes."ⁱⁱ

ⁱ Chiara Lubich "Detti Gen"

ⁱⁱ Edited by S. Pellegrini, G. Salerno, M. Caporati