



God's Gift

By Linda Wihl

"Who do you think you are, God's gift to the universe?" Dripping with sarcasm and meant to be an ego deflator, that phrase can cut to the core.

But consider Mary who humbly questioned "how could this be?" yet responded "let it be done to me according to your will". She recognized she was God's gift to the universe and was bearing God's greatest gift to the universe. "My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord!"

My desire is that every woman and man of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps can recognize that he or she is a gift from God. They feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty, serving in area foodbanks. They clothe the naked serving in thrift shops, giving vouchers to those in need. They shelter the homeless in transitional housing and foreclosure prevention programs, providing health care and spiritual healing as well. They visit the sick and isolated elderly through home visits, hospital chaplaincy and more. They visit the imprisoned through prison ministries. They've been known to bury the dead. They instruct the simple through children's tutoring and adult G.E.D programs. They counsel the doubtful in ministries like the Ignatian Spirituality Project. They admonish sinners by disciplining behavior while tutoring and teaching. They bear wrongs patiently, forgive offences willingly, comfort the afflicted because that's how loving people roll. And as we gather in community we pray for the living and the dead. Many of the volunteers see those they serve as "gifts from God" as well!

When I reflect on IVC as a gift from God I remember two of my favorite Christmas cards. One was cut from a paper bag and on the front cover read, "Some of the best gifts come in plain brown wrapping..." and inside read "and swaddling cloths!" The other was a poem from Fr. Russell Terra:

LOVE GIFT

WE ENTER LIFE PILGRIMS

Completely helpless
Utterly dependent
Wanting so much to be loved.

WE SPEND OUR LIFETIME SETTLING DOWN

Becoming self-sufficient
Completely independent
Loving only when it is safe

THE MESSAGE OF JESUS IS THAT WE ARE NOT SETTLERS

We are incomplete here,
We must learn a cosmic point of view,
We must embrace all with our love.

WE ARE MADE FOR MORE THAN THIS WORLD.

We are made for eternity.
We are made for God.
We are made to know and love in divine ecstasy.

FOR US TO REALLY UNDERSTAND THIS:

God became one of us.
Word became flesh.
Wisdom became articulated.
Love became personified.

HIS NAME IS JESUS:

He came to inspire us.
He came to heal us.
He came to give us God's love.

JESUS DOES NOT ASK FOR MUCH IN RETURN.

We are confused in the presence of love.
We are embarrassed by the gift of love.
We are powerless with the vulnerability of love.

Jesus asks only one thing.
Jesus asks what any love asks.
Jesus asks that we merely accept His gift.

AND HE WILL TEACH US TO LOVE IN RETURN!

Fr. Russell G. Terra

Pope Francis encourages us to celebrate The Year of Mercy beginning December 8th, how better to do so than to become a member of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps—you too are a gift from God!