

Sharing

Beloved person,

On Saturday mornings, after breakfast and sitting at the kitchen table, I usually manage to read the newspaper a bit more thoroughly than on other days. While I read – and often afterwards as well – a feeling of unease and sadness regularly creeps over me. It makes me insecure about my place in our big world and raises the question of what I can do to make it a little more beautiful and loving. That question brought back a memory from long ago. I saw myself sitting again in the third grade of primary school where the following story was told:

By the Sea of Galilee, thousands of people followed Jesus because they had heard that he healed the sick. In a remote area, they stayed with him, even when they became hungry. Jesus told his disciples that they should give the people food. That seemed impossible. There was almost nothing, only a little boy with a basket containing five loaves of bread and two fish. Yet Jesus accepted it, thanked God, and began to share it. Miraculously, the food increased. Everyone received enough, and there was even some left over.¹

I do not believe in the literal miracle that such little food can feed an entire crowd. My attention lingers on that little boy and the choices he had: giving nothing, because there wasn't enough anyway, or only giving to the hungriest. What touches me is that he simply gave it, openly and without reservation.

Personally, I am sometimes reluctant to share, for fear of running short myself. Do I really have enough? Isn't it wiser to keep something in reserve? After all, you never know how life will turn out. At the same time, the question may arise whether I actually have a right to what I possess, to my abundance. Did I receive it or earn it? How fortunate I actually am: I am healthy, I completed an education, and I have a job. In all those areas, I have received so much. I live in luxury, even though I do not always realise it.

But how could you live from a place of solidarity and trust instead of a sense of scarcity? In answering this question, it might help if you have experienced for yourself what it is like when others want to share with you. A friend who pays for you when you are short on cash, a neighbour who picks up your children from school when time slips away, someone who cooks for you during times of illness or grief.

Besides material possessions, what do we have to share in terms of time, attention, and talents, and in what ways can we put these to use? One of my talents is that I can give love. When I share my time and attention and am truly present with love, something sometimes arises that is difficult to capture in words. It is precisely those moments that make me feel that my presence matters and connects me with something greater. Sharing something then often gives me so much more in return.

I long for a place where I feel connected to the greater whole. Where I am encouraged: go ahead, do whatever you want, share and receive. A place where I do not have to do it alone. There I feel the connection with you, with me, and with the world.

Next Saturday, I will sit at the kitchen table again with the newspaper in front of me. And once again, thankfully, I will be moved by what I read. And hopefully, I will then not only feel powerless but also see opportunities again to work with my capabilities and with love towards a humane world. From the trust and the belief that by sharing, what you share is multiplied.

With a warm-hearted greeting,

Sister Christien Kamermans, working closely with Brother Marten van der Wal



¹ Freely adapted from John 6: 5-13