

Our Lady puts all she has at God's disposal. In an instant, all her personal plans – and no doubt she had many – were discarded so that she could do everything God wanted her to. She made no excuses, had no reservations. From the very first moment, Jesus is the one great ideal of her life.

Throughout her life on earth Our Lady showed limitless generosity. Among the few episodes of the Gospel that refer to her, two of them speak directly of her attention to the wants of others. She generously gave of her time to look after her cousin St Elizabeth until the birth of her son, John (Luke 1:31), and she was solicitous for the well-being of the young couple and their guests at the wedding reception in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1). Such attitudes were second nature to her. Her neighbors in Nazareth would have much to tell us about Mary's innumerable little services to them in their everyday lives.

The Blessed Virgin never thought of herself, but of others. She did her household chores with the greatest simplicity and happiness while maintaining the deepest interior recollection, for she knew that God was within her. In Elizabeth's house everything was sanctified by Our Lady and the Child she carried in her womb.

In Mary we confirm the truth that generosity is a virtue of great souls, who know how to find their reward in the act of giving: you received without pay, give without pay (Matt 10:8). A generous person knows how to be loving and understanding and how to give material help – without demanding love, understanding or help in return. He gives and forgets he has given, and in this lies his riches. He has understood that it is better to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). He realizes that to love is in its essence to give oneself to others. Far from being an instinctive inclination, love is a conscious decision of the will to draw close to other people. To be able to love truly it is important to be detached from everything and, especially, from self, to give

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gratuitously . . . This detachment from self is the source of a balanced personality. It is the secret of happiness (John Paul II, Address, 1 June 1980).

Today let us ask the Blessed Virgin to teach us to be generous, first of all with God and then with other people, those we live or work with and those we meet in all the varied circumstances of our lives. She will show us how to give ourselves in the service of our fellow-men in the ordinary course of each day. # # #

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