



You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbour as yourself (Mt 22:37-40)

Love is everything. When Jesus was asked which was the most important of the 613 commandments he didn't have to think twice. Love God. The second, he said, was like it: love your neighbour as yourself. And they are inseparable; you cannot love one without loving the other. The theme this year **#serveoneanother** encourages this particular *attitude of love*. In our love of God we are encouraged to live with a more compassionate awareness of the needs of other people. The way we love is what matters most.

How do we live with an attitude that is attentive to the deep human need of another person? What do we do for the smallest and most helpless? What do we do for the defenceless, sick, those forgotten by everyone or those who carry burdens only known in their own heart? Who are the hungry we feed? How do we live within our own Marist community with an attitude of love?

The image of the *Faithful Pelican (Fides Pelicanus)* is an ancient one that speaks beautifully of this attitude of love. The Faithful Pelican has captured the attention and imagination of worshippers through the ages, from those at prayer in the chapel of the Marist General House in Rome to the crypt of St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. It is believed that at times of famine the mother bird pierces her chest to feed the young with the nutrients of her blood. It is for this reason that the Church uses this image of self-sacrifice through giving as a powerful symbol for Christ and the Eucharistic Church. Although *sacrifice* may be an uncomfortable word for us, it is through sacrifice that we are also given life. We believe that it is not only those who are served that will be given greater freedom and liberation but also those who are doing the serving too: *it is in giving that we receive (Saint Francis of Assisi)*. We believe that as we serve others we grow closer in our relationship with them and through this experience grow closer to God. It is God we are serving. Our act of serving draws us more into communion with the whole of humanity promoting the very Christian attitude that builds community.

So let us take seriously the call to serve one another. As Marists, let us grow in our love of God and of our neighbour. Let us know the needs of our neighbour. Let us build community whose spirit is one of a mutual, compassionate and loving attitude to serve. Let others experience through our acts of love a God who in fact frees and liberates us from loneliness, despair and sadness.

It is a call to live with a compassionate attitude to serve, an attitude of love. This is the only way to be like God: *Be compassionate, as your Father is compassionate (Lk 6:36)*. *Let it always be said of us Marists [the Little Brothers of Mary] as it was of the early Christians: See how they love one another! (Marcellin Champagnat)* Love is everything.

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