

Heroes In Our Midst

We're with them every day and often fail to see their courage and dedication. They are the ordinary people whose daily seemingly simple acts of love are extraordinary. A recent visit to my son and daughter-in-law and their children opened my eyes to this in a very powerful way.

Both of my grandsons are uniquely gifted and it takes deep love, patience and time to unwrap this. Both have been identified as being on the autism spectrum and need consistent advocacy, structure and reinforcement to help them flourish and thrive. I did it for only a week and was exhausted. Joe and Meg do it daily while holding down high pressure jobs. As I left, I called them my "heroes"—and they truly are. Those boys couldn't have better parents. Sam and Simon are going to make our world a better place—and we're all going to be richer because of them.

Being with them for a week reminded me of an employment "ad" going around on the internet recently. It went something like this: "Wanted—full time position requiring organizational, management, mediation, nursing, budgeting, chauffeuring, and culinary skills; on call availability; no vacation; limited pay." Who in the world would sign on for this job? Who would even be interested? The answer of course was "mothers" (and fathers, too). And when the children are uniquely gifted, there's the advocacy, appointments, and the daily follow through added on to an already full plate. What heroes these parents are!

Parents with seriously ill children fall into the hero category as well—and it changes them. I have a friend whose teen-aged daughter was healthy one moment and in just a few seconds, everything changed. She had a brain bleed and this once star athlete is now in the hospital learning to sit and move and talk all over again. Mom and Dad are there every day celebrating the small steps and seeing God's hand at work there.

And what heroes are those who care for an ailing spouse or parent whose spirit flame has been blown out by illness. It is tedious and heart-wrenching and never-ending. Yet it's done with love, stretching the heart way beyond its comfort zone, resulting in a depth of fidelity and intimacy one never expected. It's the hardest thing they've ever done, but they wouldn't have it any other way.



All of these heroes are following the path of Jesus who gave us the commandment to "love one another as I have loved you." In the hindsight of 2000 years we tend to see everything Jesus did in epic terms, but in reality, most of his work was interacting with people in a very small area in a very small country. He loved where he was and invited us to do the same.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta is known for her love and care for the dying and forgotten. But she's quick to point out that we don't have to cross oceans to love as she did. "Stay where you are. Find your own Calcutta. Find the sick, the suffering, and the lonely right there where you are — in your own homes and in your own families, in your workplaces and in your schools. You can find Calcutta all over the world, if you have the eyes to see."... It's not about how much you do, but how much love you put into what you do that counts." I have found the paradox that if I love until it hurts, then there is no hurt, but only more love..."

Love upon love—that's what our heroes have in common. They may not fly across the sky, wear capes, or leap tall buildings at a single bound, but in God's eyes, I think, these are the real superheroes.

- Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate