

Holy Thursday-2026

Have you ever watched the delightful and heart-warming movie, “Patch Adams?” It came to mind as we celebrate Jesus’s call to wash the feet of others through a life of service. Patch Adams was someone who experienced a profound calling to serve other people as a doctor. He was an extraordinary one in that he intertwined his vast medical knowledge with a profound sense of humor and personal caring. To Patch, someone was much more than a symptom, disease, or number. Each person was a unique individual who deserved to be treated with the utmost dignity and respect. Before each person he encountered, he habitually experienced a sense of “awe of wonder.” He had a deep awareness that everyone was “fearfully and wonderfully made,” and that before every individual, he was “standing on holy ground.”

We are all called by Jesus Christ to the service of other people, but in doing so, what is our disposition of heart? Is it like Patch Adams? Do we do it with joy or

with a bad attitude? Do we do it with a personal and caring approach or with a rushed and detached spirit? Are we willing to go above and beyond, or do we focus on the least we are required to do? Do we do it out of love or fear or duty? Are we motivated by a sense of mission or obligation? Even though there will be times when our motives will be mixed or less than ideal, we are called to habitually strive to do it with a heart of joy and love.

I believe that there are some spiritual and practical things we can do to increase the likelihood of being a “cheerful giver.” First, our primary spiritual inspiration comes from the Gospel of Matthew in which Jesus, speaking of the issue of service, personally identifies Himself with every person: “As often as you did it for your sisters and brothers, you did it for Me.” “As often as you failed to do it for your sisters and brothers, you failed to do it for Me.” Jesus went on to explain that the stakes are high because eternal joy or eternal misery hangs in the balance of our ongoing decision concerning the service of others. Our spirit of service is transformed when we live with the daily awareness

that in serving other people, we are simultaneously serving Christ. This has a way of bringing out the best in us since the quality of our service reflects the quality of our relationship with Jesus. Have you ever thought about that? It's both an inspiring and sobering thought!

We are better able to live with this spiritual awareness in a sustained manner through devotion to daily prayer. Authentic prayer helps us to become more of a people person. It increases our capacity for love, which inspires us to reach out and respond to others as necessary. It opens our eyes more fully to the needs of those around us and gives us the compassion, empathy, and sympathy to do something about it. It helps us to see how much every person, whether in joy or suffering, is loved and cherished by Jesus.

Second, there is greater likelihood that we will be a "cheerful giver" if our commitment to service is grounded in a sense of mission and calling. It is a mission and calling that flows from our baptism into the life and ministry of Jesus and our decision to

consciously follow Him daily. In doing so, we are the recipient of the Great Commission of Jesus to “go out into the world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.”

One essential way of doing this is through our daily acts of service. Depending on our personal mission and calling from God, we can do this through marriage and family life, single life, priesthood or religious life, our career path, volunteering, and random acts of service. It truly makes all the difference to see our service as living out a mission and calling from God. By doing so, we are continually reminded that it is not just about making money, taking care of business, and providing for ourselves and others. At a deeper spiritual level, this is a personal mission of service we have been given by Jesus. The Sacred Scriptures reveal that we are called to be good stewards of our mission, and that we will be called to give an account of it before Christ.

There are also some practical ways we can become a more “cheerful giver.” At the most basic level, it involves a commitment to proper diet, rest, and

exercise. If we are feeling good, and feeling good about ourselves, that brings an extra spark of energy and vitality to our service. On another level, life balance is a key ingredient to being a “cheerful giver.” It is difficult to be “cheerful giver” when we feel like we have the weight of the world on our shoulders. We can bring increased joy to our service by setting proper boundaries and collaborating with other people. We do not have to say “Yes” to every person or service opportunity. We also do not need to take on the service other people should be doing, whether in the home, at work, or in personal relationships. We are called to invite and challenge others to carry their “proper share” and “fair share” as a form of personal responsibility and accountability. Finally, we can become a more “cheerful giver” by taking the personal time we need to renew ourselves through recreation, hobbies, entertainment, socializing, or time to ourselves.

Jesus wants us to have a deep commitment to our mission to service. He also wants us to stay focused on those aspects of service that we know and sense

He wants us to prioritize. By keeping these spiritual and practical matters in mind, we can become more of a “cheerful giver” like Patch Adams. More importantly, like Jesus Christ. It becomes our deepest joy and labor of love, to wash the feet of others, in imitation of our Servant God.

Our faith community has been stunned and absolutely gutted by the unexpected and untimely death of our beloved Jacquie Bierwirth. She was the epitome of a “cheerful giver.” For the last couple of days, amid flowing tears, I have heard and read stories about the numerous ways, great and small, that she touched the lives of our spiritual family. The most common buzzwords used to describe her and her service were joyful, loving, caring, and saintly. She was our very own Patch Adams. She was our very own Jesus in the flesh. She has provided us with an example to imitate with our own unique style and flair. As she washed our feet for so many years joyfully and devotedly, now Jesus washes her feet with the Living and eternal water of His love, in the glory of heavenly paradise.

