

THE SIXTH FLOWER: SERVICE

“It is not behaviour, words or actions, which are essential, but what fills our heart.”¹

I came so far in my ministry and my commitment, O Master of my life, endorsing your gifts and applying them on myself for my inner purification and use to spread your Good News. These gifts have allowed me to do greater things² than of what you have done. But your fifth gift, the flower of discernment, is a dangerous one. It has the power to destroy me and my discipleship if I do not discern between the truth and the fake. But you, who enabled my shadow to heal and to perform miracles,³ are very attentive and aware of my weakness. You reacted quickly, out of your compassionate love, and you gifted me with the sixth flower.

You knew that I needed a flower reminding me of your words at all times. A flower, whose color and scent could enter my inner conscience and live in my senses and my soul. A flower that with its presence, would enable me to focus on your words about discipleship and leadership when you said and you acted in accordance to your saying: “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”⁴

This flower is the flower of service; the flower of praising God’s creation. Serving another is an acknowledgment of the presence of God in him. It is openness to his personhood with love. Rendering service to the other is rendering service to me. I am the first one who will benefit from it. The other does not need me as much as I needed him. He is my way to God.

The last two flowers added a new dimension and a variety of ministries to my apostleship. With the gift of discernment, I was able to detect what is needed for the sake of the congregation and God’s Creation. I began to use my role in an effective way and diverting the work load into different ministries, which grows according to its need. And, the grace of the ability to serve has allowed me to implicate other members for this great call. As an Apostle, Christ commanded me to go, teach and baptize in the name of

¹ *The Diary of A Russian Priest*, Alexander Elchaninov, (SVSPress, New York, 1982), p. 111.

² John 14: 12.

³ Acts 5: 15.

⁴ Matthew 20: 28.

the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I, in my turn, recognize the need for more labourers for the harvest and so, I must serve and evangelize in His name too. The continuity of Christ's command must not cease, or even, diminish. It has to continue with the full force and power of the command.

I was called and have been sent by the Master, and therefore I should call others and send them. But how can I choose? Who am I? The Master is the Lord, the Commander, and the One who knows what is in the hearts of men is the only one who can call and choose. But how can I take such a role? I am unworthy and I became a follower by God's grace only. I am a follower, a disciple, who requires perpetual discipline.

It is here that I came to understand why you sent us forth, O Lord, "two by two"⁵ and why you told us: "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."⁶ You wanted to tell me that only in your name and through the assembly, the Church, I can act. The Church is the place where the right decisions are taken because of your presence. Its action is a collective one where your words are the guiding path. For this reason, I should not fear.

The flower of serving is now bestowed. There is a need to serve the tables of the neglected widows,⁷ a ministry that can be done by anyone. But my responsibility, as a disciple of Christ, is to appoint men with "good reputation and full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom."⁸ I made the call, the Church approved it, and chose the servants who obeyed and accepted the call. The appointment was completed by prayers and the laying of hands.⁹

The call was made by the congregation for a low key ministry; the serving of tables. The called have accepted this ministry with humility and obedience due to their desire to serve their fellow men and to become laborers of love. As with the Apostles, they did not question where, why and when. But they were ready to do anything, to go anywhere and fill any role to spread God's message, and bring people to their salvation.

⁵ Mark, 6:7.

⁶ Matthew, 18:20.

⁷ Acts 6: 1.

⁸ Acts 6: 3.

⁹ Acts 6: 6.

Entrusted with small things, the least of things, the called ones, the unworthy, were led to greater things “well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little; have authority over ten cities,”¹⁰ to a ministry that is equal to the Apostles’ ministry.

And they began to evangelize...

¹⁰ Luke 19:17.