

## Sharon Everett

Sharon needed a big heart because all the world found its way inside there. She received her early education in the local area, but that launched her devotion to care for the world. Besides serving in the United States, she spent many years offering education in Germany, Turkey, and Japan, and then traveled the Silk Road through Afghanistan, Thailand, Iran, and Spain. Her care spanned the complete range of people's ages—teaching third graders, helping the homeless, and supporting those with Alzheimer's. The old expression, "She never met a stranger," was particularly apt for Sharon because she befriended everyone—even if she couldn't speak their language. Why let a thing like that get in the way? Her deep compassion fueled her vision for a better world. No, more than a vision, a desire for a better world. Well, more than a desire, she made this a better world.

After an extraordinary life of endless adventure, she found particular meaning serving the Catholic Worker movement. I have special admiration for that movement because one of my mother's cousins was a priest who became friends with Dorothy Day. Catholic Worker Houses show how the world can live more simply by simply living.

Sharon's life may not seem so simple, but she made it all look easy. The compassion marking her daily life forms a good context for the passage we just heard from the First Letter of Saint John. Compassion starts from John's principle: "God is love." That is foundational to our system of belief. Love feels good to have inside, but it is properly directed outward. John says, "Everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God." God poured out his love and made us his children. We know God because he loved us. Based on this, John exhorts, "Let us love one another." As we have received God's love, we are to share it with one another. His headstrong community needed this reminder.

Sharon, though, saw it clearly. She experienced the love of God so intensely she had to share it with others. Once she started sharing, there was no stopping it. Her love poured out like water from a firehose. Everyone here benefitted from it—even if you never knew Sharon, you benefitted from her love because the people she touched have touched you. She was a vehicle of the love of God.

St. John gives this origin for God's command: "In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another."

We're all grateful for people like Sharon in the world, but we should not become complacent because of people like Sharon in the world. We must not comfortably sit back and say, "How nice that people like that are showing compassion." No, "If God so loved us, we also must love one another."

We grieve the loss of an amazing woman who showed us not to be afraid of serving others. Loving other people doesn't have to mean unpleasant effort. Sharon taught us something else: Love is adventurous. Love is fun. Love is your passport. Today as we thank God for Sharon's life and witness, we carefully place her soul into God's loving arms. May the one who begot her in love bring her home at last, where heaven too may find its way inside Sharon's big heart.