

Marist Minute

5 September 2023

“Gosh, I’d love to swap lives with you” were the words spoken to me by an exasperated colleague who was knee deep in marking, supporting his family through bereavement and trying desperately to keep his head above water in a new leadership role. I wasn’t feeling the same way. It’s true, we constantly let comparison with others steal our joy, but we can also carry an attitude of gratitude that tells us “at least I don’t have it as bad as him”. This sense of ‘othering’ is a by-product of individualisation and perceived self-reliance and doesn’t acknowledge the gifts with which each of us are born.

During 2020, Pope Francis said solidarity is the antidote to selfishness and exploitation, stating: “At Pentecost, the Spirit descended upon the disciples and created a community united by faith, united in diversity and in solidarity. Diversity and solidarity joined in harmony. This is the path. A diversity with solidarity has the ‘antibodies’ necessary so that each person’s individuality — which is a unique and unrepeatable gift — does not get sick with individualism, selfishness.”

Solidarity seeks the good of the other, it is conceived in friendship and comes to birth in ongoing relationships. “To love someone is to desire that person’s good and to take effective steps to secure it. Besides the good of the individual, there is the good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of ‘all of us’, made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society.” (Pope Benedict XVI, Charity in Truth).

As I reflected on my colleague’s aspiration to swap lives, it made me realise that my response to those in need should be built upon love and perhaps I might then be prepared to walk more than a mile in their shoes.



Journal Questions:

How does comparison affect you?

How can you live greater solidarity?

