

Washing Dishes for the Lord

“I hate housework! You make the beds, you do the dishes and six months later you have to start all over again.” Joan Rivers

Did you ever think that washing dishes would be a holy action, one that honors the Lord? Not only can it honor the Lord God, it can bless others as well.

After church dinners, the deacons end up washing dishes afterwards. Sometimes a few others, seeing the need and wanting to help, roll up their sleeves and start washing dishes. I have to think that God sees that, and sends a blessing to the dishwasher.

There's a certain order to washing dishes. My father taught me that you wash the glasses first, then the silverware, then the plates, and then the pots and pans. In order of cleanest to dirtiest. It's always good to use Joy, or some other detergent when the best is not available.

Some would think of washing dishes as a lowly job. Not so. It is a symbol of serving in the small things which can grow to something quite world-changing.

St. Bonaventure was a major player in the Catholic Church hierarchy. But before that, he was a dishwasher. The story goes that they were going to bring the red hat to anoint him cardinal. Anyway, when the delegation showed up at his friary, they found him washing the dishes. He actually sent them outside to wait for him to finish the dishes. Legend has it, he asked them to leave the red hat on a tree outside. So the saint finished washing the dishes and then came to greet the papal delegation.

Sometimes we wait for the important tasks in the work of God, before we do anything. We may spend a lifetime waiting, and then find that the important things are the ones which seemed small at the time. In fact, washing dishes may be the most important thing we do in a day.

Washing dishes, in fact offering to wash dishes, steps beyond taking food or people for granted, and shows we care. Mother Teresa, who spent her life in service for the poor, knew this. “Wash the plate,” she writes, “Not because it is Dirty, not because you are told, but because you LOVE the person who will use it next.”

Love them, even if you don't know who it might be. Now that's love!

Jesus has a conversation with the Pharisees about washing dishes. In fact, they insisted on ceremonial washing, but not cleaning up their own lives.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, so that the outside may become clean as well. Matthew 23:25-26

As we wash dishes and the other routine chores of the day, let us be glad for them all. That attitude will give us both the humility and the attitude which will make a positive difference for others. Grandma knew.

“Grandma, on a winter's day, milked the cows and fed them hay, hitched the mule, drove kids to school...did a washing, mopped the floors, washed the windows and did some chores...Cooked a dish of home-dried fruit, pressed her husband's Sunday suit...swept the parlor, made the bed, baked a dozen loaves of bread...split some firewood and lugged it in, enough to fill the kitchen bin...Cleaned the lamps and put in oil, stewed some apples before they spoiled...churned the butter, baked a cake, then exclaimed, ‘For goodness sake!’ when the calves ran from the pen, and chased them all back in again...Gathered eggs and locked the stable, back to the house and set the table...cooked a supper that was delicious, then washed and dried all dirty dishes...fed the cat and sprinkled clothes, mended a basketful of hose...then opened the organ and began to play: ‘When You Come to the End of a Perfect Day...’~
Reminisce Magazine

Washing dishes, one of the few remnants of the chores of yesteryear, is a lost art to many. Since the advent of the electric dishwasher, many people have no idea how to begin when confronted with a stack of dirty dishes. Many never even see dishes, because many meals are served on plastic or paper plates. And the age old TV dinner doesn't even use those!

We must teach our kids when they are young, train them up, the Bible says. If they learn the basics that it takes to contribute to the happening of the day, they will know how to live, serve, work, and not take things for granted.

Writer, Erma Bombeck definitely had kids! “Do you know what you call those who use towels and never wash them, eat meals and never do the dishes, sit in rooms they never clean, and are entertained till they drop? If you have just answered, 'A house guest,' you're wrong because I have just described my kids.”

Hopefully this does not describe you. Jesus calls us to be servants, not kings. What better place to start than the kitchen sink?