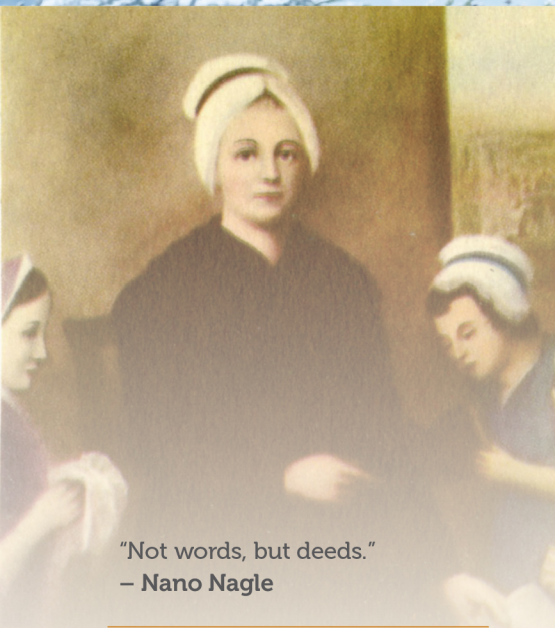




Compassion

Nano Nagle: The Lady of the Lantern

By Natalie Slieter



“Not words, but deeds.”
– Nano Nagle

“Growing up, I saw and learned compassion through the actions of others. A man opening up the door for a woman, a teacher taking extra time to make sure their student understood a problem, a volunteer Sunday School teacher sharing bible stories, a group of farmers putting aside their own work and coming together to assure a neighbor’s field was harvested. God surrounds us with compassion each day and all it takes is for us to open our hearts not our eyes to see it.”

– Tom Bosch, Vice President of Hospitality for Avera McKennan and member of Nano’s Network



Nano Nagle founded the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1775. She was born in Ireland in 1718. While Nano finished her Catholic education in France, she spent her free time socializing and dancing. Early one morning, she saw poor people waiting outside the church. Nano was struck by how they were waiting in the cold to attend Mass while she had enjoyed an evening out and felt compassion for them. Her sister Ann also played a role in her learning of the trait. Nano was looking for some fabric set aside to make a party dress, but couldn’t find it so asked Ann about it. Ann told Nano she gave the fabric away to someone who needed it more than they did. Nano was amazed at her sister’s compassion.

Nano realized something needed to change in her life. In 1746, she joined a convent in Paris. She felt led to work directly with those in poverty so she left the convent and returned to Ireland at age 32. She opened schools in secrecy to teach Catholic children who weren’t allowed an education. After teaching

children all day, Nano spent her evenings caring for the sick and elderly. Some nights she walked with sores on her feet, because she realized having compassion meant “suffering with.”

The Presentation Sisters have looked to Nano as their example of compassion. In 1880, they arrived in Aberdeen to educate children. When a diphtheria epidemic hit the area, the sisters became nurses to care for the sick. The healthcare ministry they began, and now Co-sponsor with the Benedictine Sisters, is what is known today as Avera Health. Some ways the sisters have shown compassion to Sioux Falls in the last century is by operating an orphanage, caring for HIV and AIDS patients, and welcoming immigrants.

Sister Virginia McCall ministers to locals in Zambia, Africa. A local man asked her for assistance with covering the public school fees so his daughter could attend. Sister Virginia told him they would help and the man cried, saying, “I didn’t think my daughter would ever go to high school.”

“Compassion is setting aside your personal needs to respond to the needs of others,” Sister Virginia defined. “It’s caring for the sick, suffering, neglected, isolated, and vulnerable.”

Sister Virginia hopes others can show compassion in a few ways. First, live simply by spending less. Save money to purchase food and clothing for those less fortunate. Second, put a face on those in need by visiting those in nursing homes and hospitals, and accepting the poor, immigrants, refugees and those who have been forgotten in your city. Third, experience the life of the homeless and refugees by traveling to other countries and forgoing the typical tourist experiences. Finally, volunteer with local organizations servicing those in need such as Caminando Juntos, Bishop Dudley Hospitality House, St. Francis House, Kids Against Hunger, Food Pantry and Salvation Army.



Sister Virginia McCall currently ministers in Kaoma, Zambia, Africa. She works compassionately with the most vulnerable people in the area to help alleviate the root cause of poverty. For more information on Sister Virginia’s ministry and the Presentation Sisters, please visit: www.presentationisters.org