

Finishing the Work

On a cool and sunny Monday morning along the Big Coal River in Orgas, West Virginia, our group on the Whitesville mission trip met homeowners Gladys Ferrell and her son Ken.

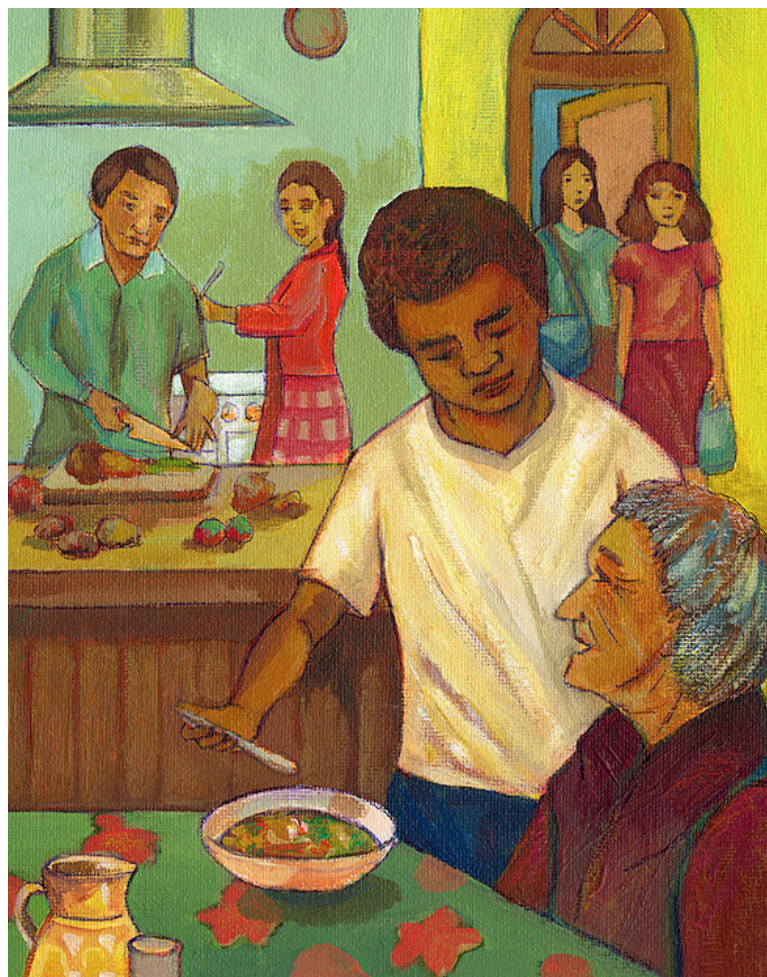
Gladys and Ken live in one of the poorest communities of southern West Virginia. They own a home that was built in the 1950s and shows its age. When our group arrived, many parts of the home were in need of repair, but our primary responsibility was to replace the water heater and windows and frame windows that had been replaced the previous year.

As with so many projects, we kept finding other areas that needed attention. Since the paint was peeling and the wood warped on the shutters, it was decided to include those in the project. All nine of us grew enthusiastic about working on the shutters, thinking it would be the perfect finish to the new windows. Anticipating the work, we picked out a paint color at the local hardware store, one of the few remaining retail outlets in town.

Unfortunately, Mother Nature didn't share the enthusiasm for improving the shutters. Rains that were so torrential that nearby communities were flooded, ruling out the opportunity to paint the shutters. Although the interior work was completed, the exterior work was far from done when we finished. Leaving, we were disappointed, feeling that our job was incomplete, insufficient, and imperfect.

Life is often like that experience. A project is taken on at home, a proposal at work, or activities are planned to fill our days only for life to intervene, undoing plans and leaving projects incomplete, insufficient, and imperfect. This pattern continues throughout our lives, and people, of course, often leave unfinished projects when they die.

It is easy to imagine that Jesus might have accomplished so much more had he had more time on earth. Surely he could have performed more miracles,



Speaking with compassion, regarding others with respect, and working for peace continue Christ's work in the world.

preached more, healed more people, and converted more hearts. However, by saying the words "Do this in memory of me," he left the work to us.

Whenever the liturgy is celebrated, we help to complete the work of Jesus. Whenever we speak as Jesus spoke, with words of healing and compassion, we help to complete the work of Jesus. Whenever we work as Jesus worked, for peace and for justice, we help to complete the work of Jesus. Whenever we love as Jesus loved, unconditionally, we help to complete the work of Jesus. As long as we continue to do these things, the work of Jesus continues until the time when all work has been fulfilled.