

Merciful love

February 2022

Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away. (Jn 6:37)

This affirmation made by Jesus is part of a dialogue with the crowd that was surrounding him. After the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, the people continued to seek him out and asked for a sign to believe in him.

Jesus revealed that he himself is the sign of God's love; indeed, he is the Son to whom the Father has entrusted the mission of welcoming every creature, especially every human beings made in his image, and bringing them back to his home. The Father has already taken the initiative and is drawing everyone to Jesus,ⁱ he has placed the desire for the fullness of life, that is communion with him and with all fellow human beings, in our hearts. Jesus, therefore, will not reject anyone, no matter how far they may feel from God, because the Father's will is to lose no one.

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It is truly good news: God loves everyone immensely, his tenderness and mercy are directed towards every man and woman. He is the patient and merciful Father who waits for anyone who, prompted by the voice within, sets out to make their way towards him.

We are often doubtful and suspicious: why should Jesus welcome me? What does he want from me? In reality, Jesus only asks us to allow ourselves to be drawn to him, to free our hearts of all the "clutter" that weighs us down and to trustingly welcome the love he freely shares. But it is also an invitation that appeals to our sense of responsibility. In fact, if we experience such an abundance of tenderness on the part of Jesus, we, in turn feel moved to welcome him in every neighbour - man or woman, young or old, healthy or sick, from our own culture or not And we will not reject anyone.

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In Quebec, Canada a Christian community that lives the Word is committed to welcoming many families that are arriving in their country from all over the world: from France, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Congo... All of them are welcomed and helped and this includes support in integrating into a new environment. This means answering their many questions, filling in forms relating to refugee or resident status, coordinating with their children's schools and accompanying them to discover their neighbourhoods. Enrolment in French courses and finding work are also important.

Guy and Micheline write: "A Syrian family that came to Canada to escape the war met another family that had just arrived. Members of the newly arrived family were very disoriented. Using social media, a network of solidarity was created and many friends provided items that were needed such as beds, sofas, tables, chairs, crockery, clothing,

books and games. In fact, it was the children who learnt about the plight of this family from their parents who spontaneously offered the latter. The family received more than they needed and, in turn, helped other poor families in their area. That month's Word of Life had come true: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself!'"ⁱⁱⁱ

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We can transform this Word of God into life by giving witness to the Father's closeness to every neighbour, as individuals and as a community.

This reflection by Focolare founder, Chiara Lubich, on merciful love helps us. "*This love,*" writes Chiara, is "..... *the love that opens its heart and arms to those who are wretched and suffering, ..., to those torn apart by life and to repentant sinners. It is a love that knows how to welcome all neighbours, whether friend, brother, sister or stranger, and forgives many times over. ... A love that does not measure and will not be measured. It is charity that flourishes more abundantly, more universally and more practically than anything the soul possessed before. In fact, in front of everyone we meet, the soul feels sentiments springing up within that are similar to those that Jesus knew. It finds that divine words not unlike those used by Jesus appear on its lips: 'I have mercy on this crowd' (cf. Mt 15:32). ... Mercy is the ultimate expression of charity, it is its fulfilment. And charity surpasses pain because pain is part of this life while love endures even in the next. God prefers mercy to sacrifice.*"ⁱⁱⁱ

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ⁱ Cf Jn. 6:44

ⁱⁱ Cf. Mt. 25:44

ⁱⁱⁱ C. Lubich "La Dottrina Spirituale" Citta Nuova, Rome 2006