

Impulse 02 : RED

Love takes us to communion; it is communion.

Love can only be responded to with love! – One who is touched and affected by love feels compelled to respond. They will begin to give of themselves, just as Jesus did, who was rich and became poor for our sake (out of love) (Philippians 2:5-11). This creates new communion.

Chiara Lubich also experienced this. She says, "**Our love of God – as our response to his love** – took shape in the love of our neighbours (...) Due to the sufferings of war, our love first went particularly to the poor. We saw the face of Jesus in their emaciated, sometimes repulsive faces. It was a process of learning, since we were not used to loving in a Christian way. Until then, our attention had been limited to our relatives and friends, with the usual attitude of sincere respect and friendship. By the grace of God and our trust in him, who also provides for the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, we turned our attention to the poor of the city. We invited them to our homes for dinner. If they could not come to us, we would meet them someplace in the city and give them everything we had collected for them. We visited them in their squalid dwellings and brought them medicine."

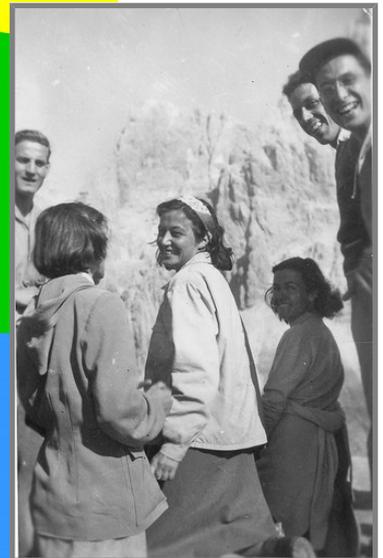
This form of **giving** combined with our trusting prayers ("Ask and you will receive." John 16:24) **stirs God's heart** and puts it in motion. We can experience God time and time again as someone who is close to and cares for us. God comes into our daily lives whenever we ask him to and lead our lives accordingly. Every Christian can experience this. "Lord, give me a pair of size 8 shoes for you," the young girls in Trento asked, praying, full of trust, in front of the tabernacle, 'for you in the poor man who needs it.' 'Lord, give me a men's jacket for you.' It was not rare for us to step out of the church and be given a pair of shoes or a men's jacket.'" They shared these experiences with each other from the start, because they "belonged" to all.

But the power of God's love holds even more in store. Love that gives itself away evokes response. **This makes love reciprocal** and a place where Jesus is present. At the end of his life, Jesus left his friends this secret of reciprocal love as his new commandment, saying, "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). On another occasion he promised them, "Where two or three gather in my name," – and his name is 'love that lasts to the end' – "there am I with them." (Matthew 18:20)

This is the discovery the **first Christians** made in Jerusalem. "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had...there were no needy persons among them (Acts 4:32-33). When people really are of one heart and one soul, as the first Christians were, everything begins to circulate, because the heart of God – love – beats in their midst. The result is a communion of goods.

jesus beim
WORT
genommen

Life in colours



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above: Chiara Lubich
(centre) with mem-
bers of the first group

Nothing remains unused. Both abundance and need are shared. Jesus's most important word is "give." If we follow this word of Jesus to give over and over, we will become immersed in the power of the Gospel, which bids us, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap." (Luke 6:38)

We can always give: a smile, understanding, forgiveness, an ear, our intelligence, our will, our availability, our time, our talents, our ideas, our assistance, our experience, our skills, our possessions, which we can regularly check to make sure nothing accumulates. Give! If we dwell on this word, the light of God will shine anew on this earth and we will give the practice of the first Christians new space and new radiance among us.

During the '68 movement, Chiara Lubich advised a group of young people, "Help each other in every way, especially in material matters. The needs of one of you must become the needs of all. Love one another as you love yourself. If one of you is unemployed, then all of you are unemployed and looking for a job. If one of your mothers is ill, then it is as if everyone had an ill mother and took care of her as if she was their own. If one of you is hungry, it is as if everyone suffered from hunger; get him something to eat as if for yourselves (...) Share joys and sorrows with each other; deeds, not words; everything for the love of God."

This form of giving also includes **our work**. Jesus, Mary and Joseph earned their own livings, too. Work should be an expression of our love, as work gives us the opportunity to find fulfilment. Through our work, we contribute to God's work of creation, put God's plan into action and serve society. We put a lot of effort, perseverance and endeavour into our work; we need to be on time, we need to earn money and manage it ... It is important to do it well and lovingly – as a masterwork of conscientiousness, order and harmony. This way, our work becomes an expression of our love for God. At the same time we need to be internally liberated from it, to make sure we don't reach the point where we idolize it. Jesus also invites us to "leave our fields." (Matthew 19:29)

Dear young friends, we are encouraged to use all our gifts in wise and responsible ways to build the kingdom of God, and not to bury anything or keep it for ourselves, because nothing really belongs to us alone. At some point we will have to part from everything we "own." Our money and our personal possessions, our commitment, our patience, our ideas and our contributions: all of these can benefit everyone if we put our goods to the service of the community and let them circulate. Then God's heart will be beating among us! Let us advocate the **culture of giving**. Let's only keep the things we really need – and follow the example of the plants. They only take so much water, salts and other things from the soil as they really need. Let us give everything else away and make it available to others.

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Biblical sources

Matthew 12:29, Luke 6:38,
Luke 18:22, Acts 4:32-35,
Philippians 2:5-11

Impulses

- Write down the name of everyone who was your "neighbour" today. Love them all.
- At the end of the day, ask yourself, what did I give today (out of love)?
- What is my "too much," my "unused," my "dust" from which I can part?
- What has God given to me (today) unexpectedly (providence)?
- One possible principle: Give clothes or other things to the community whenever you receive a gift or purchase something.
- Where did I instinctively become aware of need and felt the urge to help? Did I have the courage to do it?
- Set up a monthly list of your income and expenses, to give account to yourself.