

IDEA OF THE MONTH

February 2023

Experiencing that we are not alone

Life sometimes makes us feel a certain sense of loneliness and we may experience sadness, anguish, pain and emotions that prevent us from moving forward. Some people refer to these times as "desert moments." They are opportunities to go inside ourselves and be able to experience that we are not alone, because it is right there, in that place, in that new situation, that we can feel the presence or the warmth of those who are by our side.

It is an opportunity not to stop but to give new meaning to life and to the things that have happened to us and to direct our future actions according to this new perception.

However, we must try to revive the awareness that, inspite of what we feel at that time, we are not alone as we journey through life: love exists in us and around us and we can enable it to flourish even during our "deserts moments". Let us not run away from challenging and painful situations but take advantage of them. They can help us discover the love of the people around us and build relationships with them. If we think it is right, we may speak to them about the pain that saddens us.

This sharing may sustain us and allow us to sweep away that sense of loneliness that seemed to oppress us, and we will find the freedom to love those around us once again.

Thus, if we realise again that we are custodians of the presence of this love that accompanies us always, we too can return to being messengers or bearers of it. We can observe the needs of others and can help them in their "desert moments" without judging them but sharing in their joys and sorrows.

The greatest effort lies in understanding that those sad feelings and emotions we experience arise from inalienable vital needs such as understanding, trust, sharing, esteem, reassurance and communion. Let us try to meet these needs through the relationships with the people who help us. At the same time, let us keep our eyes open to the needs of the people around us and show understanding and esteem towards friends who are lost like us. We may have a word to share with those who are searching for meaning and answers to the many questions in life. These people may be friends, family members, acquaintances, neighbours, co-workers, people in economic difficulty and perhaps socially marginalized. We can offer encouragement to those who have lost faith in their future.

Thus, we can, face life's difficulties together with others and discover in the deserts we cross that "golden thread of love" that will give us hope and help us to regain that trust in ourselves and others that seemed to have faded.

This was the experience of P who lived alone during the time of the pandemic. She recounts that from the very beginning of the total closure of all activities in her country, she was left in isolation in her home, with no one beside her with whom she could share this experience and try to occupy the day. As the days passed, she became more and more discouraged. She had a hard time falling asleep at night, and it seemed to her that she could not escape from the "nightmare of loneliness" that oppressed her. The strength not to succumb came to her at the thought that there were so many people around her who she could ask for help or to whom she could give something. To her surprise, she experienced that in the love given or received there was a great strength that prevented her breaking down. Little signs and glimmers of light from friends began to reach her and made her feel confident that she could manage the situation. An example was the time when she was celebrating a friend's birthday online and, immediately afterwards, a neighbour left a slice of cake by her door.