

IDEA OF THE MONTH – May 2024

Mutual love fulfils us

Many people experience free and unmerited love from the time of birth onwards through the attention and affection of those who care for them. This is how we learn to love, more through life than through words.

This experience makes us realise that true love involves courage, effort and the risk of facing adversity and suffering. Consequently, those who love in this way experience the freedom and joy of self-giving. When we love, we feel free from the selfishness that closes the doors to communion with our brothers and sisters and prevents us from growing in fraternity and truth.

When love is reciprocal, it is similar to two electric poles that come into contact and produce light all around them. Thus, mutual love fulfils us.

Chiara Lubich tells us that bearing witness to this love is *'the great revolution that we are called to offer to the modern world which is in a state of extreme tension.'*

How can we do this? How can we love in this way? By learning from those who show us how to do so. Chiara invites us to focus on serving our neighbours, especially those closest to us, beginning with little things, with the most humble kinds of service. We can strive to take the initiative in loving, be detached from ourselves and embrace all the suffering and the small or big challenges that this may entail.

In this way, we too will soon reach that experience of love, that fullness of light, peace and inner joy that fulfils us as human beings.

A young woman named Santa often visited a care home for the elderly. One day she and a colleague called Roberta met Aldo, a tall, very cultured and very wealthy man. Aldo looked sternly at the two young women and said, 'Why do you always come here? What do you want from us? Why don't you just let us die in peace?'

Santa didn't lose heart and told him, 'We are here for you, to spend some time together, to get to know each other and become friends.' They continued to visit the home regularly.

Roberta recounts, "That man was particularly closed in on himself and dejected. He did not believe in love. Santa was the only one who was able to get close to him, gently listening to him for hours. She prayed for him and, on one occasion, gave him a gift of an object that she loved very much which he accepted". Later, Santa learnt that he had spoken her name as he was dying.

The pain of his death was lessened by the fact that he died peacefully, holding the gift she had given him.