

IDEA OF THE MONTH

January 2024

Loving in a concrete and practical way

The desire for eternity is inherent in every man and women, irrespective of whether their beliefs are religious or based upon other values. Each of us would like to leave behind something of ourselves that will remain forever. This is felt strongly by artists who express themselves in the works they create and so share what is deep within them, but it is also the experience of those who work in scientific research, those who seek to create an economy that will benefit humankind, those who fight for fundamental rights and those who dream of a world of peace and fraternity.

However, it is also true that by loving every person has the opportunity to live an experience that has the flavour of eternity. This begins by loving those closest to us and extends to those furthest away, without ever forgetting that neighbour that life puts next to us every day. We are reminded of this by a phrase, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you", the so-called "golden rule" found in all cultures and religions.

The key, therefore, is to love always and this means taking care of our neighbours, sharing joys, sorrows, not remaining closed within ourselves but building new relationships based upon mutual respect, fraternal communion, selfless help, collaboration and searching together for what is of value. This can be an extraordinary experience that can give meaning to our lives and enrich what we feel most deeply. It responds to the need to make a "relational good" circulate among us. This brings "flavour" and meaning to our lives as individuals and to society around us.

The challenge is to love everyone without distinction, to take the initiative in loving, to fully understand the other person and their needs and to respond in a concrete way because love is not sentimentality but a value that moves the mind, the heart and our muscles, calling us to action. Where there used to be domination, indifference and loneliness we will see life full of meaning that will leave a lasting mark. Our small but decisive and strong actions will enable such life to spring up all around us.

We all know that it was Jesus of Nazareth who first spoke of mutual love. His words still resonate with us and indicate a way to follow. We may recall the story of the Good Samaritan who found a foreigner lying on the road following an attack by robbers who had left him wounded. The Samaritan took great care of him whereas a priest and a Levite had passed by without even stopping.

We can be like that Samaritan and love others in a concrete and practical way especially at the moment when there is so much violence, war, oppression and killing in the world. As Chiara Lubich said, we can create a "culture of peace for the unity of all people" in our homes and workplaces.

This was her dream, and it can be ours too.