

May

On behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Cor 5:20)

This is Paul's appeal to the Corinthians which follows his great announcement, the heart of the whole Gospel: God has reconciled the world to himself through Christ (see 2 Cor 5:19).

God has given us the greatest proof of his love in the death of his Son on the cross. Through the cross of Christ, he has reconciled us to himself.

This fundamental truth of our faith has much to say to our times. It's the revelation that all human-

ity is waiting for. Yes, God is near to everyone with his love and he loves each person passionately. Our world needs to hear this, but we can say it if firstly we announce it to ourselves, again and again, so that we really do feel enveloped by this love, even when everything could make us think otherwise.

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This faith in the love of God, however, cannot remain locked up deep inside each person. As Paul explains very well: God has given us the task of bringing others to reconciliation with him (see 2 Cor 5:18) by entrusting to each Christian the enormous responsibility of witnessing to God's love for his creatures. How can we do this?

Our way of behaving should make this truth credible. Jesus said clearly that before bringing our offering to the altar, we should be reconciled with our brothers and sisters if they have something against us (see Mt 5:23–24).

And this holds true first of all within our communities: our families, groups, associations or churches. In other words, we are called to break down all the barriers that block harmony among people and nations...

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"On behalf of Christ" means "in his place". Our aim then is to take his place, to live with him and like him, and to love one another as he loved us, that is, without being limited by attitudes and prejudices, but being open to accepting and appreciating the positive values of each neighbour, ready to give our lives for each other. This is Jesus' commandment par excellence, the true mark of Christians, as valid today as it was in the time of the first followers of Christ. Living these words means becoming reconcilers.

If our every gesture, every word, every attitude is imbued with love, they will be like those of Jesus. Like him, we will be bearers of joy and hope, of harmony and peace, of that world

reconciled to God which all creation awaits.

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