

## September

### **Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God (Rom 15:7).**

These words are among the last recommendations Saint Paul made in his letter to the Christians in Rome. This community, like many others spread throughout the Greco-Roman world, included believers who came from both Gentile and Jewish backgrounds. Their mentality, cultural formation, and spiritual sensitivities were quite different. Such diversity produced attitudes of judging, of prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance towards each other that could not be reconciled with the attitude of reciprocal welcome that God would have wanted them to have.

To help them overcome these difficulties, the Apostle could find no more effective means than to make them reflect on the grace of their conversion. The fact that Jesus had called them to faith, giving them the gift of his Spirit, was tangible proof of the love with which he had welcomed each one of them. Despite their past lives and the difference in their backgrounds, Jesus had welcomed them together into one body.

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These words of Saint Paul remind us of one of the most touching aspects of Jesus' love. It is the love with which Jesus, during his life on earth, always welcomed everyone, especially those who were outcasts, who were most in need, who were farthest away. It is the love with which Jesus offered his trust, his confidence and his friendship to everyone, knocking down, one by one, the barriers that human pride and selfishness had erected in the society of his times.

Jesus was the visible sign of that perfect welcoming love that the heavenly Father has for each one of us, and of that love which, as a result, we must have for one another. It is the first will of God for us to live out. For this reason we can give the Father no greater glory than by trying to welcome each other in the same way that Jesus welcomed us.

### **Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God.**

How should we live this word of life? It draws our attention to one of the commonest forms of selfishness and, let's face it, one of the most difficult to overcome: the tendency to isolate ourselves, to discriminate against and exclude others who are different from us and who could disturb our tranquillity.

Let us try to put this word of life into practice first of all within our families, associations, communities and at work by ridding ourselves of our judgements, discrimination, prejudice, resentment or intolerance towards one neighbour or another. These attitudes are common and easy to fall into, but they spoil and have a chilling effect on human relationships. Just as rust

corrodes, they block our mutual love.

Then, let us put these words into practice by bearing witness to the welcoming love of Jesus with every neighbour that the Lord puts next to us — particularly with those whom our collective social selfishness most easily tends to exclude or marginalise.

The act of welcoming others who are different from us lies at the very basis of Christian love. It is the starting point, the first step to building that civilization of love and fostering that culture of sharing that Jesus is calling us to more than anything today.

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