

February Word of Life

‘Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away.’ (Jn 6:37)

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This statement by Jesus is part of a dialogue with the crowd who, after seeing the miracle of the multiplication of loaves, seek him out and ask him for another sign in order to believe in him.

Jesus reveals that he himself is the sign of God's love; indeed, he is the Son to whom the Father has entrusted a mission – that of welcoming every creature, especially every human being made in his image, and bringing them back into His house.

Yes, because the Father has already taken the initiative and is drawing everyone to Jesus, placing in the heart of each one, the desire for the fullness of life, which is communion with God and with all fellow human beings.

Jesus, therefore, will not reject anyone, no matter how far they may feel themselves from God, because this is the will of the Father: not to lose anyone.

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It is truly good news: God loves everyone immensely, his tenderness and mercy are directed towards every man and woman. He is the patient and merciful Father who waits for anyone who, prompted by the voice within, sets out on the journey towards him.

We are often doubtful and suspicious: why should Jesus welcome me? What does he want from me? In reality, Jesus only asks us to allow ourselves to be drawn to him, to free our hearts of all the ‘clutter’ that weighs it down so that we can trustingly welcome the love he freely shares.

But it is also an invitation that calls for our responsibility. In fact, if we experience such an abundance of tenderness on the part of Jesus, we, in turn feel moved to welcome him in every neighbour - man or woman, young or old, healthy or sick, from our own culture or not And we will not reject anyone.

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In Quebec (Canada), a Christian community that lives the Word is committed to welcoming many families who arrive in their country from all over the world: from France, Egypt, Syria, the Lebanon and Congo... All of them are welcomed and helped including with integration support. This involves answering their many questions, filling in forms relating to refugee or resident status, liaising with their children's schools and accompanying them to discover their neighbourhoods. Enrolment in French courses and finding work are also important.

Guy and Micheline write: 'A Syrian family that came to Canada to escape the war met another family that had just arrived. Members of the newly arrived family were very disoriented. Using social media, a network of solidarity was created with many friends providing items that were needed such as beds, sofas, tables, chairs, crockery, clothing, books and games. In fact, it was the children who, learning about the plight of this family from their parents, spontaneously offered them toys for their children. The family received more than they needed and, in turn, helped other poor families in their building. That month's Word of Life had come true: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself!"'

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We can transform this Word of God into life by bearing witness to the Father's closeness to every neighbour, as individuals and as a community.

To help us comes this reflection on merciful love by Focolare founder, Chiara Lubich. *'This love stretches our heart and arms to embrace the wretched, the poor, repentant sinners, and those whom life has ravaged. A love that knows how to welcome back our neighbour who went astray, our friend, our brother or a stranger, and pardons them any number of times.... It is a love that does not measure and will not be measured. It is charity in bloom, which is more abundant, more universal, more active than the charity the soul possessed before. Feelings similar to those of Christ are born in the soul of whoever experiences this love, and with all they meet they feel the divine words, "I have compassion on the crowd" (cf. Mt 15:32) come to their lips.... Mercy is the ultimate expression of charity, and it fulfils charity. Charity surpasses suffering, for sufferings belong to this life alone, whereas love continues into the next. God prefers mercy to sacrifice.'*

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