

“You will be able to support one another”

When you love other people and you spread that affection - Christ's kindly, gentle charity - all around you, you will be able to support one another, and if someone is about to stumble he will feel that is being supported, and also encouraged, to be faithful to God through this fraternal strength. (The Forge, 148)

When the fullness of time comes, no philosophical genius, no Plato or Socrates appears to fulfill the mission of redemption. Nor does a powerful conqueror, another Alexander, take over the earth. Instead a child is born in Bethlehem. He it is who is to redeem the world. But before he speaks he loves with deeds. It is no magic formula he brings, because he knows that the salvation he offers must pass through human hearts. What does he first do? He laughs and cries and sleeps defenseless, as a baby, though he is God incarnate. And he does this so that we may fall in love with him, so that we may learn to take him in our arms.

We realize once again that this is what Christianity is all about. If a Christian does not love with deeds, he has failed as a Christian, besides failing as a person. You cannot think of others as if they were digits, or rungs on a ladder on which you can

rise, or a multitude to be harangued or humiliated, praised or despised, according to circumstances. Be mindful of what others are — and first of all those who are at your side: children of God, with all the dignity that marvelous title entails.

We have to behave as God's children toward all God's sons and daughters. Our love has to be a dedicated love, practiced every day and made up of a thousand little details of understanding, hidden sacrifice and unnoticed self-giving. This is the “aroma of Christ” that made those who lived among our first brothers in the faith exclaim: *See how they love one another!* (Christ is passing by, 36)

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