

Rome, 25 May 1978

‘Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap’ (Lk 6:38).

Has it ever happened that you received a gift from a friend and then felt you had to give something back? Not so much to repay a debt, but out of true grateful love? I’m sure it has.

If this happens to you, imagine how it must be for God, who is love.

He always reciprocates every gift we give to our neighbours in his name. True Christians experience this very often. And each time it is a surprise. We never get used to the inventiveness of God. I could give you thousands of examples! I could even write a book about it! And you would see how true are the words: ‘a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap.’ It shows God’s abundance when he reciprocates, his wideness of heart.

Here is one example.

Night had fallen in Rome. In their basement flat, a small group of young women who wanted to live the Gospel were wishing each other good night, when suddenly the doorbell rang. Who could it be at this hour? On the doorstep they found a man in a state of great agitation. He was desperate: the following day he and his family were going to be evicted because they were unable to pay the rent. The women looked at one another and then, in silent accord, went to the drawer where, in separate envelopes, they kept what was left of their salaries together with money saved for their bills: gas, electricity, telephone. Without a moment’s hesitation, they gave their visitor everything. That night they went to bed happy. Someone else would take care of them. Then, just before dawn, the phone rang. It was the same man. “I’m coming right over by taxi!” Amazed that he should have chosen to come by taxi, they waited for him. When they saw his face they knew something was different. “Last night, when I got home,” he said, “I received an inheritance I never dreamed I would get. My heart told me I should give half of it to you.” The amount he gave them was exactly twice what, in their generosity, they had given him.’

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Haven’t you also experienced this? If not, remember that the gift must be given with no self-interest, with no hope of return, to anyone who asks.

Try it. But not to see the result; try it because you love God.

You might say, ‘I haven’t got anything.’

That’s not true. If we want, we possess inexhaustible treasures: our free time, our heart, our smile, our advice, our culture, our peace, our words that might persuade someone who has to give to someone who has not.

You might also say, ‘I don’t know who I should give to.’

Just look around: remember that sick man in hospital, that widow always alone, that school friend who failed a test and is so downhearted, that jobless young person who is always depressed, your little sister or brother who needs a hand, that friend in prison, that new woman at work who is a bit insecure. In each of them, Christ awaits you.

Take up the new, Christian way of behaving, the one filling the Gospel, and which is ‘anti-closedness’ and ‘anti-worry’. Give up seeking security in this world’s goods and start relying on God. This will show your faith in him, and it will be quickly confirmed by the gifts that come back to you.

And it makes sense that God does not act like this to make you or us richer. He does it so that others, many others, seeing the little miracles that happen to us as a result of our giving, may decide to do the same.

He does it so that the more we have, the more we can give – so that, as true stewards of his goods, we make all things circulate in the community around us, and what was said of the first Christians can be repeated: ‘There was not a needy person among them’ (Acts 4:34).

Don’t you feel that in this way you help give a sure soul to the social revolution the world awaits?

‘Give, and it will be given to you.’

When Jesus said these words, undoubtedly he was thinking in the first place of the reward we will receive in heaven. But the reward we receive here on earth is already its foretaste and guarantee.

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(Previously published in June 1978 and October 2008)