

(English translation)

Mollens (Switzerland), 16 August 1984

## To Love Our Own Cross

Dearest all,

I would like ... to examine with you the possibility of transforming our life into a divine adventure.

Why do I speak to you about this? I feel it is a topic of great importance. I can see, above all in the lives of the first men and women focolarini who through the grace of God have made the effort to live in this way since the early days of the Focolare, the extraordinary result reached in abandoning oneself completely to God, and in allowing Him to reveal to us day by day the steps to be taken in order to fulfil His plan for each one of us.

This divine adventure produced the following result for us: we witnessed a new, modern Work of God of concrete significance emerge in the world; we saw it plant its roots deeply into the Church's soil. We admired throughout the years, the spreading of its branches to the ends of the earth.

Imagine, in the diversity of the unique plans of God for each person, what it would be like if everyone in the world made the effort to let their lives be shaped by Him. Certainly, the face of the earth would be soon renewed.

In any case, these thoughts serve to encourage us not to fall short in our own personal commitment. Therefore let's take another look at what our part should be so that the remainder of our life can be transformed into a divine adventure. Everything works for the good... everything, therefore, serves its purpose for the good. "All things God works for good [but] with those who love Him." To love God! We certainly do want to love Him. But, when are we sure that we are loving Him? It is not only when we give our hearts to Him in a moment when everything is going for the better, because that would be easy, and beautiful, but could also be just an enthusiastic reaction or one mixed with personal interest or love for ourselves, and not for Him. We can be certain we love Him if we do so also in adverse situations; furthermore, to guarantee true love for Him, we have decided to prefer Him, above all, in everything that hurts us. To love God in our obstacles and in our pains is always true, sure love. We express this kind of love with the words: to love Jesus crucified and forsaken.

To transform our lives, then, into a divine adventure, and to have the certainty that all of the past, present and future of our lives is directly useful toward fulfilling the plan of God for each of us, requires a choice of Jesus Forsaken.

But which cross, which Jesus Forsaken, must we desire to love?

Certainly not a vague cross.... Not the cross which can be a product of our imagination; for example, dreams of a martyrdom that may never come about.

To be His follower, Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them take up their cross" (cf. Lk 9:23). *Their* personal cross! Therefore, everyone must love their own cross, their *own* Jesus Forsaken. If, in fact, at a certain moment of our lives, Jesus had appeared before us and in the power of His love had asked us to follow Him, to choose Him, ... He didn't intend to manifest Himself to us in just a vague way, but instead a very precise way. He asked us to embrace Him in all those pains, worries, sicknesses, temptations, in those situations, persons and responsibilities that touch our very person, to the point of being able to say: "This is *my* cross" .... All of us have our own personal Jesus Forsaken, which is not the one of our neighbour, nor of anyone else; but really our own.

Therefore, if we learn to read beyond the trauma of our various personal sufferings, and see the love of God for each of us, life becomes magnificent, and draws us to be ever closer to our Jesus Forsaken, to embrace Him, as the saints have done, and to yearn to see Him transformed in us in a

resurrection personally related to our very selves, since "Jesus" in me is also distinct from "Jesus" in my neighbour.

What is our next step?

In order not to lose any time, each of us can make a brief examination of his or her own present situation, and then decide, with the help of God, to say yes to all those things for which we would want to cry out otherwise, but know are the will of God.

If we live in this way, everything will take on a deeper meaning. At times we will be like the grain of wheat which, because it knows how to die, will see its shoots spring forth. At times like the branch, which allows itself to be pruned, we will later see the choicest fruits.

... Let's rise in the morning with this sense of determination: "I will live today for the sole purpose of loving *my* Jesus Forsaken."

Everything else will fall into place. The Risen Lord will live in each of us and among us. He will extend His Work of Mary out to new horizons, for His own glory and the glory of Mary and for the purposes that Heaven knows, and we can perceive He will give us happiness already here on earth.

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