

## Recognition - Expressing gratitude

Recently, one text in the Gospel is speaking to me a lot; the one which tells us of Jesus' encounter with the disciples at Emmaus (Luke 24: 13ff).



The two disciples were walking, undoubtedly heads bowed and with heavy hearts, after all that has just happened in Jerusalem; a man joins them and walks with them ... It takes them time to recognise him, first they pour out their hearts and the man listens, he is attentive to their distress ... He speaks to them and describes his path in the light of what is revealed in the Scriptures. After a long time, it starts to get dark, they invite this man to stay with them and there, everything changes.

When Jesus breaks the bread, they recognise him! They can now see the earlier signs of this recognition: their hearts burning when Jesus spoke to them on the road. To each of us, to me, I'm sure this special moment has happened in our lives: recognising Jesus. We all know these special moments when we can recognise him and their impact on our lives is profound. In a letter to Louise Deschamps, written in 1842, the founder wrote: "It is right that we recognise the blessings of the Lord, and it is a duty to express our gratitude to him." As the psalmist sings in Psalm 100 "Know that the Lord is God, He made us and we are His ...", I am asked to recognise him, tell him of my gratitude and express it in the everyday reality of my life.



It is not easy to always recognise the presence in God in all that happens to me, in what I see, but that is what allows me to see God in the heart of all these experiences and join the founder when he expresses in his prayer, "Lord, where shall I turn when I can no longer see you ...? " Looking back over all the years I've lived, I have to admit today that His faithful presence has always carried me, even when it took me some time to be able to recognise it after troubles, the sometimes trying time of darkness, doubt, violence and injustices I have witnessed, much like the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

But recognising Jesus invites me to prove to him that I saw this presence; to know how to thank him, in prayer and in action; this is to be grateful... like the disciples of Emmaus who went to the others after their encounter with Jesus and told them what had happened. Yes, today I want to express a profound thank you to Him for all those who helped me to know Him, to recognise Him and who invited me to share this encounter with life, through fraternal gestures, in attention to the other for everything they bring and share of what is beautiful and true, for all those moments that marked me and aroused in me the impulse toward others. It was not always easy, but it was always a source of growth.

"Your gratitude will be an ever-renewed motive for new graces that Jesus will be pleased to give you and from this conflict of generosity and gratitude there will arise spiritual treasures that will make you mercy instruments" the founder write to Olympiade Delville on July 25, 1836 (6-42). Even though the style seems outdated to us, to me, in any case, the message is clear: I cannot be an instrument of mercy unless I am grateful to God first, but also to the people I meet. It is a call to say thank you, to express it concretely in the everyday challenge of my life and everything it brings. This is a work of patience, against the backdrop of the unfailing faithfulness of God. This presence of heart, which makes the other and myself join together in what makes our essence, which allows all the depth of love given and received to be expressed, these are expressions of mercy. If I have often failed, got lost in the byways, have ignored concrete calls to let God in and through me, there were also highlights, encounters and events that revealed His presence and His love to me. I am slowly coming to the end of this life and can only be grateful for all these signs.

I would like to conclude this reflection with the prayer of Paul to the Colossians 3, 15: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful." May this call resonate in me, in us, in this moment and in the future, and lead us to express peace and love wherever we live, with all who have been, are and will be part of our lives.



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