

MEDITATION BY MICHEL QUOIST

Lord why did you tell me to love ?

Those who have begun to give themselves to others are saved. In receiving their neighbour they will receive God and will be freed from themselves. We are our own worst enemy. At a human level we bring suffering on ourselves and at a spiritual level we bar the road to God. Everyone can and must give themselves. If they have one talent let them give that; if they have 10 let them give 10. It's only in giving that one can receive. But anyone who has begun this giving, realises very quickly that they cannot retreat. They are afraid: one must then encourage them and show them that it's only on the condition that they give to others that they will succeed in their lives and will know the joy of God.

Lord why did you tell me to love everyone?

I have tried, but I come back to you - frightened.

Lord, I was so peaceful at home, so comfortably settled.

It was well furnished and I felt cosy.

I was alone, I was at peace sheltered from the wind and the rain the mud.

I would've stayed unsullied in my ivory tower, but Lord you have discovered a breach in my defences. You have forced me to open my door. Like a squall of rain in the face, the cry of other people has awakened me like a gale of wind, a friendship has shaken me. As a ray of light slips in and noticed your grace has stirred me....and rashly enough, I left my door ajar.

Now Lord I am lost!

Outside, others were lying in wait for me. I did not know they were so near; in this house in the street in this office; my neighbour my colleague my friend. As soon as I began to open the door, I saw them with outstretched hands, burning eyes, longing heart like beggars on church steps. The first ones came in Lord. There was after all, some space in my heart.

I welcomed them. I would've cared for them and caressed them, my very own little lambs, my little flock. You would've been pleased Lord. I would've served and honoured you in a proper respectable way.

Till then it was sensible.

But the next ones Lord, the others, I had not seen them. They were hidden behind the first ones.

There were more of them and they were wretched. They overpowered me without warning. We had to crowd in, I had to find room for them.

Now they have come from all over, in successive waves, pushing one another jostling one another.

They have come from all over town, from all parts of the country, of the world; numberless, inexhaustible. They don't come alone any longer, but in groups, bound one to another.

They come bending under heavy loads, loads of injustice, of resentment and hate, of suffering and sin - they drag the world behind them with everything rusted, twisted or badly adjusted.

Lord they hurt me ! They are in the way, they are everywhere.

They are too hungry they are consuming me.

I can't do anything anymore, as they come in, they push the door and the door opens wider...

Lord, my door is wide open!

I can't stand it any more. It's too much. It's no kind of life.

What about my job ? my family ? my peace ? my liberty ? and me ?

Lord I have lost everything. I don't belong to myself any longer; there's no more room for me at home.

Don't worry God says, you have gained all.

While people came in to you, I your Father, I your God, slipped in among them.