

(English translation)

Rome, 1978

I was sick

In a hospital ward I once saw a man with a plaster cast. His chest and right arm were immobilized. With his left hand he tried to do everything... as best he could. The cast was a torture, but the left arm, although it was more tired than usual by the end of the day, grew stronger by doing twice its normal work.

We are members of one another and mutual service is *our duty*. Jesus did not merely advise us to serve one another, *he commanded us to do so*.

When we help someone out of charity, let us not believe we are saints. If our neighbour is powerless, we must help him and help him as he would help himself if he could. Otherwise, what kind of Christians are we?

If, later, our hour has come, and we need our neighbour's charity, let us not feel humiliated.

At the last judgement we shall hear Jesus repeat the words: 'I was sick and you visited me ...' (Matt. 25:36) I was in prison, I was naked, I was hungry... Jesus loves to hide himself precisely beneath the suffering and needy.

Therefore in these times too, let us be conscious of our dignity, and with our whole heart thank the person who helps us. But let us reserve the deepest gratitude for God who created the human heart to be charitable, and for Christ who, by proclaiming with his blood the Good News, and especially 'his' commandment, has spurred on countless hearts to help one another.

With this commandment Jesus has distinguished Christians of all centuries from others who have not yet entered his Church. If we Christians do not manifest this characteristic, we come to be confused with the world and lose the honour of being deemed 'children of God'. And – foolishly – we leave unused a weapon, perhaps the most powerful of all, for witnessing to God in an environment frozen by atheism, that paganizes everything, is indifferent and superstitious.

May the astonished world gaze at the display of brotherly harmony and say of us, as of those who gloriously went before us: 'See how they love one another'.

Chiara Lubich

(Taken from *Meditations*, New City, London)