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THE  
MEANING OF  
CHARITABLE  
WORK





## GOAL

1. Above all, our very nature requires us to be interested in others. When there is something beautiful within us we desire to communicate it to others. When we see others who are worse off than we are, we desire to help them with something of ours. This need is so original, so natural, that it is within us before we are conscious of it. We call it the *law of existence*. We do charitable work to satisfy this need.

2. We become ourselves to the extent that we live this need and this requirement. Communicating to others gives us the experience of completing ourselves. This is so true that, if we are not able to give, we experience ourselves as incomplete beings.

To be interested in others, to communicate to others, enables us to fulfill the supreme and, indeed, the only task in life: to become ourselves, to complete ourselves.

We do charitable work so that we may learn to fulfill the task of becoming ourselves.

3. But it is Christ who has enabled us to understand the ultimate reason for this, revealing the ultimate law of being and of life: charity. The supreme law of our being is to share in the being of others, to live in communion.

Only Jesus Christ reveals this to us, because He knows what everything truly is, who God, from whom we are born, truly is, what Being truly is.

I am able to understand the word “charity” when I remember that the Son of God, loving us did not send us His riches (as He was able to do) and revolutionize our situation; instead He became poor like one of us: He “shared” our nothingness.

We do charitable work in order to live like Christ.

## CONSEQUENCES

1. Charity is the law of being and comes before natural likes and dislikes and feelings. Therefore, we can “do for others” while lacking any enthusiasm. There may very well be no so-called “concrete” result. For us, the only “concrete” attitude is attention to the person, that is, *love* for him.

All the rest can come as a consequence: like Jesus who only after He manifested His love, performed miracles and fed the hungry.

We must note two initial points which are not usually clear regarding our openness to others:

### a. Meeting the need of others:

This is an insufficient starting point and motive. What is the real need of another?

This way of viewing things is unclear, because it depends on what we believe to be others’ needs. But what if that which I bring is not truly that which the other needs? I do not know what the other truly needs, nor can I measure or possess it. It is a measure that I do not possess; it is a measure that is in God. Therefore, “laws” and

systems of “justice” can be oppressive, if they forget or attempt to substitute for the only “concrete” reality that exists: the person, and love for that person.

### **b. Friendship**

Using friendship as one’s point of departure and as the final goal of one’s action, with all the ambiguity that this encompasses, is also incomplete.

Friendship is a correspondence that one may or may not find: it becomes the road to our destiny, but not the end in itself.

2. To freely go to others, to share a little of their life and to put in common a little of ours, enables us to discover a sublime and mysterious thing (one understands doing it).

It is the discovery of the fact that precisely because we love them, it is not we who make them happy. Who is the reason for everything? Who made everything? God.

So Jesus is not only He who announces to me the truest word, who explains the law of my reality, He is no longer only the light of my mind; I discover that Christ is the meaning of my life.

The witness of those who have experienced this value is very beautiful: “I continue to do charitable work because all of my sufferings and all of theirs have a meaning.”

Hoping in Christ, everything has a meaning: Christ.

I discover this, finally, in the place where I do charitable work, precisely by means of the final powerlessness of my love; it is the experience in which the intelligence discovers wisdom, true culture.

3. But Christ is present now; it is not that “He was,” not that “He was born,” but rather “He is born” today; this is the Church. The Church is Christ, present now, as he willed.

And the Church is the community of us, precisely us, poor and attached to Him.

Therefore hope sustains us: God Himself is among us, is present among us. One of us, in a discussion, said: “I continue to go to... because of you.” This is true; precisely the meaning of our being together, of the ecclesial community, makes us go forward in our work among the handicapped, in the hospices with whoever is needy and, tomorrow, in the factory, on the city, in Europe, in the world which is so large and awaits Him.

## DIRECTIVES

To keep the movement as one’s reference point. Otherwise, there is a great danger to lose the search for the profound idea which sustains us in working for others; the danger is greater to fall into discouragement, fatigue, or infidelity.

Fidelity is entrusting oneself to the indications of the movement and to those who are the leaders is the first merit and will have its fruit.

There are three directives regarding Communion and Liberation:

### **1. Know why**

Until we know well, with clarity and simplicity, the ultimate reason, the goal of our work, until then we must never be satisfied. Our goal is to bring forth from what we do the meaning, the idea, for which exclusively we will succeed in being faithful when we are no longer enthusiastic and experience no satisfaction.

It will therefore be necessary to have an open dialogue in our assemblies, in groups, with the leaders of the community, with those persons who are more mature and alive. Above all, it is necessary to verify our journey with the leaders of the community.

### **2. Doing in order to comprehend**

In order to *understand* it is not enough to *know*, it is necessary to *do*, with the courage of freedom, which is the adherence to that being which is seen, that is, to truth.

If the law of existence is living in communion, then we must share everything, every instant.

This is the supreme maturity, which is called humanity or sanctity, It is much more difficult to educate ourselves to this ideal if the cause of our action is a sense of constraint by external circumstances (“duty” in the normal use of the word).

It is the *free time* that I have which educates me; that which gives the exact measure of my availability to others is the use of that time which mine alone, with which I can do whatever I want. In this way, we form a mentality, an almost instinctive way of conceiving all of life as a communion.

The small amount of free time redeems all the rest. And, little by little, doing charitable work, one begins to understand better one's colleague at the bank, one's mother and father, one's coworker.

This mentality can be more easily assimilated in one's youth. And it is only in beginning to do, to give of one's free times as an integral gesture of freedom, that Christian charity will become a mentality, a conviction, a permanent dimension.

It should be noted that the multiplicity of activities and the quantity of time that one dedicates is not important. It is important that in our life and in our awareness (conscience) the principles of *sharing* (condividere) be affirmed at least through some gesture, even minimal, as long as it is systematic and brought to realization. For this, once a month would be enough, as a beginning. Regarding the frequency of this work, one should consult the community.



### 3. Order

It is our free time that we must use. There are two limits which maintain the order of this free time:

- (a) Do not neglect study or work
- (b) Do not neglect one's family

Here also a personal dialogue with the authority in the family and with the authority in the Movement will help you to find the criteria to determine your free time.





