

## Lord, why did you tell me to love?

Lord, why did you tell me to love all men, my brothers?  
I have tried, but I come back to you, frightened...  
Lord, I was so peaceful at home, I was so comfortably settled.  
It was well-furnished, and I felt cozy.  
I was alone, I was at peace,  
Sheltered from the wind, the rain, the mud.  
I would have stayed unsullied in my ivory tower.  
But, Lord, you have discovered a breach in my defenses,  
You have forced me to open my door.  
Like a squall of rain in the face, the cry of men has awakened me;  
Like a gale of wind a friendship has shaken me,  
Stealing in like a shaft of light, your grace has stirred me.  
...and, rashly enough, I left my door ajar. Now, Lord, I am lost!

Outside men were lying in wait for me.  
I did not know they were so near; in this house, in his street, in this office; my neighbour, my colleague, my friend.  
As soon as I started to open the door I saw them, with outstretched hands, anxious eyes, longing hearts, like beggars on church steps.  
The first ones came in, Lord. There was, after all, a bit of space in my heart.  
I welcomed them. I would have cared for them and fondled them, my very own little lambs, my little flock.  
You would have been pleased, Lord; I would have served and honored you in a proper, respectable way.  
Until then, it was sensible...  
But the next ones, Lord, the other men--I had not seen them; they were hidden behind the first ones.  
There were more of them. 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 anymore! It's too much! It's no kind of a 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 room for me at home.

Don't worry, God says, you have gained all,  
While men came in to you,  
I, your Father,  
I, your God,  
Slipped in among them.

*[By Fr. Michel Quoist, 18 June 1918 – 18 December 1997 a French Catholic priest, theologian and writer, most known for his best-selling book, 'Prayers of Life', published in 1954]*