

A BIT OF COMPANY | ISABELLE PYPAERT PERRIN

Posted on 28 November 2016



“Those most in need can surprise us if we allow ourselves sufficient imagination to learn from them. They teach us that honour and dignity are

worth more than our daily bread."

– Fr. Joseph Wresinski

Message – November 2016

I would always see him sitting outside on his doorstep while I was on my way to work.

To be honest, when he greeted me every day, he made me feel rather uneasy.

Whether it was sunny, raining, or windy, his daily comment on the weather came to be our little ritual:

"Oh, today will be sunny," or, "It's going to rain again."

After his remarks, I would soon forget him, wrapped up in my own life. In fact, I was afraid that if I were to stop and answer, he might ask me for something.

One day, just as I was expecting him to comment on why the first snow hadn't yet fallen, he asked me,

"Please, would you have any change to spare?"

I must admit, he did look famished. Embarrassed, I slipped him a bill without listening to his thanks. For a few days, I felt less guilty about not stopping to talk. I thought, perhaps, that I could change my route to work if I really wanted to. However, I didn't; and one morning he called out to me again:

"Would you have a minute to come in?"

Stunned, I hesitated. But why not, after all? It was the first time he had asked.

I went in and I saw a number of things: a broken chair, a plastic tablecloth full of holes. But above all, I heard something: just above the sink, in a cage, two small birds were singing. He must have read the surprise on my face as he said:

"I wanted to introduce you to my birds. Thanks to you, at last I bought myself a bit of company."

What I came to understand that day opened a new door for me.

Dear friends,

It was Antoine who told me of this beautiful moment with a man and his birds. The door that opened for Antoine that day marked his first steps on a long journey, one in which people learn to get to know and understand one another. Only that way can we overcome the fear and the preconceptions that we all hold. Only then can we see the

person who calls out (or not) as our equal, someone who wants to meet others, who dreams, and who seeks to experience the beauty of life.

ATD Fourth World creates opportunities for people from very different backgrounds to get to know one another. These moments are cherished by all, and especially by the people who are most exposed to contempt and mistrust.

We want to thank you for any contribution you can make to help us continue to create such opportunities, transforming momentary encounters into long-lasting ties. May this holiday season offer every person the chance to meet and get to know others.

Isabelle Pypaert Perrin
Director General

This message is an invitation to support ATD Fourth World's work in Switzerland, Bolivia, Senegal, and many other countries where we build relationships between people of very different walks of life in order to offer solidarity to families who are among the most disadvantaged.

Your gift can make a difference. Please [click here](#) to make a one-time donation online. Or to make a regular monthly pledge, please [click here](#).

Donations can also be mailed to:

ATD Fourth World
12 Rue Pasteur
95480 Pierrelaye
France

Painting: © Guillermo Diaz – Guatemala