



A Precious and Revealing History

Address by Father Joseph Wresinski at the Seminar "Extreme Poverty and Exclusion in Africa", Pierrelaye, France, 19 May 1981.

Dear friends,

You accepted our invitation to be here with us, so how could we not call you friends? You have shown friendship by accepting our invitation and trusting that we are serious in wanting to create ties of friendship and solidarity with you. For that we are grateful.

We are even more grateful because many of you responded spontaneously, from your hearts, sensing perhaps that we would try never to disappoint those who extend to us the hand of friendship. Although you sensed this, you could not yet know it, for you hadn't yet experienced it. You didn't really know us yet. Your coming here confirms something said by Mr. Hampaté Bâ, your teacher, who has also become ours: "When trust is given spontaneously, there can only be trust in response."

Now that you are here to get to know us better, I would like, as a way of welcoming you, to say some things about what we are, what we try to be, in the ATD Fourth World Movement. That will take you beyond simple trust and enable you to know us and judge us. But how shall I tell you about us?

Not long ago, Mr. Hampaté Bâ, in welcoming a member of our volunteer corps to his home in Abidjan, said, "One way of welcoming a guest is to kill a calf. But you can also do it by sharing with the guest a part of your own history, of the course your life has taken." And it is true that the history of our movement is our most precious possession — the most precious and the most private as well, because it is not our history, but the history of the poorest of our fellow citizens. They confided their history, all that they knew and carried on their shoulders; and they have allowed us to take part in it with them. In reconstituting their history with us, they have given us a double gift:

- ·they have allowed us to change our hearts and our personalities, to become different from what we were before;
- they have shared not only the humiliation and suffering of their history but also its immeasurable hope. For as suffering increases, so does hope.

So the history of our movement, mixed as it is with that of the most excluded families — those who still know hunger, premature death, and ignorance even in the richest countries — is the most precious thing we can offer you as a welcome.

I will endeavour not to try your patience, but I want to say some things that we don't usually say in public; things that we generally say only to true friends because others, perhaps, could not understand them.

Sharing What Is Most Precious to Us

It would be easy to present some simple facts: that our movement was born in France in 1957; that it has gradually spread to all the countries of Western Europe, then to the United States, and later to Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Africa.

It would be easy to tell you that it is a movement of solidarity and sharing with the most rejected and excluded families in the world; that it conducts grass-roots and research projects in many areas including early childhood, primary education, vocational training, social and political participation, housing, and family resources. It would be easy to tell you how, step-by-step, we gained recognition from various governments and consultative status with major international organisations in Europe and throughout the world.

All that would be easy, but it would be banal. Those are the things we are most often asked: "What do you actually do? What is your official status? What are your finances?" When we answer those questions, we say nothing about ourselves, about what makes us live and grow, about what gives us courage and hope, or about the confidence and love that make it possible for us to reach the poorest people and remain with them, to experience their heartbreaking situation and change it with them.

That we can manage to do this intrigues those who question us. "How do you do it?" they ask us. But we know that most often they would like us to describe a method, a technique that would allow others to do the same. The question is misleading, or at least inadequate, and the expected responses could only be inadequate. For, reaching the poorest people is not primarily a question of doing but of being. We should be asked above all, "Who are you, that the poorest people and families agree to open to you the doors of their ghetto apartments, their shacks, their trailers, or other makeshift shelters? Who are you that they trust you — to the point of risking to change their lives — by walking with you and by allowing you to walk with them?"

The first gift that you, our African friends, have given us has been to refrain from asking us superficial questions. You have done us the honour of wanting to know who we are — what we most deeply seek — before asking us what we do concretely in our day-to-day life and struggle.

You have the right to ask us for this specific information as well, and we will talk about those things as much as you like. But I would simply like to thank you for the gift of being as interested in the nature of our volunteer corps as in what it does — the concrete actions that we plan carefully and evaluate each year with the families who have agreed to welcome us.

You have honoured us and we will try to respond by connecting with you, by sharing with you a part of our history that is more personal, more private, and more difficult to tell.

A History that Started in Solitude and Hardship

But what shall I say if I want to give you the essence of our history, the part we don't often say in public?

I think I must tell you first of all about the beginning of our movement and of its volunteer corps. If we ourselves should ever forget how we began, we would lose our authenticity, our credibility, and our reason for being — as you will understand.

Our movement was born in 1957 amid pain, anguish, solitude, and scepticism from people around us. In short, it was born in almost total powerlessness and disparagement, the same suffered by the poorest people.

It was born in a shanty town worse than others we have since come to know on other continents; and yet this one was on the outskirts of Paris, the capital of one of the richest countries in the world. It was a shanty town inhabited by more than three hundred native-born French families, living in shelters of the sort normally built in rural areas for pigs. The camp was mired in mud, without electricity or sanitation, without clean water except for only a few water pumps serving everyone, and without refuse collection or postal deliveries.

No one was in solidarity with the families crammed together there. They were considered not as “the poor”, but as rubbish, at best as objects of charity and free soup programmes. Their children were almost systematically placed in foster or institutional care. Let's not forget that at that time, the West was a victim of its own success, convinced that its economic progress and social legislation were airtight protections against poverty. If you were destitute, people thought, it must be because you were a human wreck, broken down mentally or morally.

Having myself grown up in extreme poverty with my mother, my brothers, and my sister, before being ordained, I knew that in their hearts these men and women in the camp, my brothers and sisters, were not looking for charity, but for recognition of their dignity. This was true in spite of their appearance and their behaviour of people marked by poverty.

Having grown up in this condition myself was an opportunity, because I knew that these families had the will to break out of poverty and that I had to appeal to them. ATD Fourth World's originality is that its founders and first members were themselves among the poorest, most excluded people.

It was with them that the first essential and symbolic steps were taken: to demand that the charitable organisations leave, to replace the soup kitchen with a library, and to replace free distribution of secondhand clothes with a clothing cooperative. To be sure, the clothing was still secondhand, but it was worthy of covering the body of a human being.

It was with such simple but symbolic acts as these that it all began.

And when I say all, I include the difficulties and anguish resulting from these first actions. This anguish, and the heartbreaking days followed by sleepless nights, shaped the first activists who soon

congregated in this place of suffering which, nonetheless, bore a prophetic name. For the shanty town of Noisy-le-Grand was located on a high plateau called "Castle of France" — a prophetic name perhaps, because the second efforts, which followed almost immediately, were to lay the foundations for a volunteer corps and to build a chapel.

This was our way of saying — we who as yet had no material resources or financial support — that extreme poverty, the exclusion of fellow human beings, was a matter for human beings as much as for administrations and laws. It was as much a matter of love and of sharing our own deepest beliefs and values as it was of practical service. It was our way of saying that the poorest people deserved to have castles built for them: castles that could radiate, as in times past, a renewal of civilisation, culture, and spiritual life.

Concrete support followed right away, but it was based on something unfamiliar to the public and the administrations of the time. It was unfamiliar as well to the families in poverty who, although they believed in it from the beginning, could not yet bear all the consequences, for they didn't have the means to show solidarity with their neighbours, to free themselves from charity and bureaucracy. As you know, when extreme poverty and exclusion go beyond certain limits, it forces people to save themselves rather than to support their neighbours. Constant humiliation brought by the outside world — local government, schools, hospitals, police — pushes you constantly to betray your neighbours, to repeat to whomever will listen, "I don't want anything to do with my neighbours; they are bad, lazy, and thieving, and I am not like that." It is not true and they know it, but you can't do otherwise in a society where being in extreme poverty has become suspect and even contemptible.

The first members of the volunteer corps felt helpless when faced with families who wanted to turn their lives around completely but who did not dare. You can imagine the extraordinary courage needed to become someone who defended their most despised and defeated neighbours.

The social service agencies and local and national governments took advantage of the families' hesitation to confront radical change. For years they tried to discourage us, using as witnesses, and sometimes as hostages, families who were unable to defend themselves. "You see, you are wrong," they said, "because the families aren't cooperating with you. You would do better to go away and leave them alone."

If we have not given up; if, on the contrary, we have grown, we owe it to the poorest families. Because we lived among them, they would come at night to tell us what they did not dare to say to social services during the day. They told us that they thirsted for dignity as much as, or more than, for running water; and that they were hungry for learning, knowledge, the capacity to think together and to speak for themselves, rather than being, generation after generation, subjected to rules, controlled, directed, and treated as inferiors and as objects by everyone who dealt with them.

That is what made us stay on when we often had an urgent desire to flee from the impossible struggle. We held on because of the families' suffering but also because of their extravagant hope that their suffering could finally be transformed into joy. We held on also because each time we responded to their longing for dignity and learning, they became committed alongside us.

Families who had been officially classified as "weak" and "unsalvageable" supported preschool programmes involving small children and their parents, the first influence on the future and happiness of their children. They also supported academic classes, groups for women, vocational training workshops, youth clubs, committees for parents and mutual aid among families, and other cultural activities.

The "Castle of France" thus became a place of resistance to everything that belittles people. For the French today, Noisy-le-Grand is a symbol.

Where before there was misunderstanding and incomprehension, today there is understanding and solidarity, at least in part. Our first volunteers were humiliated and shown to the door by government officials who treated them as dishonourable men and women who were up to no good. That does not happen anymore. But we should not forget this past because the same humiliation and contempt are suffered by the poorest people throughout the world and form part of their history.

We have not forgotten the past, but we don't resent it.

Revealing the Exclusion of the Poorest People

More important than the evolution of public opinion which still falls short in responsibility, more important than the evolution of the institutions and officials, has been for us the evolution of families in poverty. This evolution is marked by a specific event. In 1961 at the shanty town in Noisy-le-Grand we received a delegation from La Campa, a similar camp on the opposite side of Paris. They asked, "Come to us too; we are on the brink of despair and we need you."

It must be remembered that the poorest people did not read newspapers, even though at the time the papers were beginning to talk of us. They did not have their own communication resources. They didn't yet have the newspapers that we have since created together for families in poverty. They had not yet met one another in the meetings among housing estates, shanty towns, cities, and even nations that we organise together today. So, how did these residents of a shanty town to the north of Paris know us; how did they know that we were the people they wanted? There could only have been one way: they knew because they got the information from one another by word of mouth, a hidden means of communication known only to people in poverty. They told one another that we were people with whom it was possible to live in honour rather than in falsehood and dependence.

I think that that day in 1961 was one of the most beautiful gifts ever given to us by the excluded families of Paris. In any case, it marked a turning point in our history, a turning point that was reinforced soon afterwards when the city of Paris appealed to us for help. We were less pleased by this second request than by the direct appeal from families. We knew perfectly well that if Paris turned to us for help, it was to send us to a very poor housing estate where its own services no longer knew what to do. Even a scheme for distributing milk to newborn babies had become ineffective and sometimes dangerous.

Eighty-five percent of the families were unemployed and had no resources other than public welfare. They were mired in humiliation at having been forcibly relocated to badly constructed huts that

resembled a small concentration camp. Closed in on themselves, they fell to hurling insults and stones at passers-by. Everyone was afraid of them; officials were at their wits' end, and so they called on us as a last resort. We agreed to go. Our team was showered with stones, the blows of a people in despair, but we stayed. And finally the families accepted us.

We knew from the beginning that by staying with our feet planted in the mud of Noisy-le-Grand, we were defending the honour of the poorest families in France and their right to housing, work, education, culture, and participation in the spiritual and political life of their country. Many people opposed our efforts, and I think it was because that they knew — consciously or not — that behind the dispossessed families of the "Castle of France" was hidden a whole dispossessed people throughout the towns and regions of France and across Europe. But by sending out our first team and then creating new teams, with the few people we had, to go to other places of exclusion, we brought extreme poverty to light. The reality of exclusion throughout the world became public knowledge.

Dedicating Oneself to Prove to Others That They Are Able to Take Action and Are Worthy of Respect

Exclusion was a reality revealed, but not yet recognised or accepted. France, the West, and all the industrialised countries have long continued to be dazzled by their economic success. They forgot long ago that a country that becomes prosperous does not necessarily share; that making the majority wealthy does not preclude abandoning people who don't seem to contribute to the creation of goods and wealth. Only after a long struggle was it generally admitted that there is persistent poverty within even the most developed countries. In our seminar, which begins tomorrow, I want to say more about this ignorance, this blindness that is half-willful, half-unconscious. Today, I would like to speak of another ignorance and blindness that determined the history of the poorest people and of our movement. This ignorance and blindness creates a situation in which only a team of dedicated volunteers can break down exclusion, mobilise vital forces, bring to light the buried hopes of a rejected people, and create the bridges that would allow people in poverty and more privileged fellow-citizens to meet.

Contrary to what is sometimes thought, a volunteer corps committed for life was not for us a preconceived idea, an ideal drawn in advance from our civilisation or religious faith. Although our movement was created by a Roman Catholic priest, its calling from the beginning was to gather around the poorest people with persons of good will of all faiths and beliefs, including those who have no connection with any religion.

As with everything else that we have attempted, the poorest families themselves have taught us the necessity and the meaning of committing ourselves to those who are excluded. I just spoke of their distress when they understood the upheaval and the risk, for their already difficult lives, that would follow from their standing up together, moving ahead together, and even more, approaching families they didn't know in places they didn't know in order to bring them along toward a similar transformation. "Together we will be strong" is what the inhabitants of the "Castle of France" began to say, and also those of the shanty town La Campa (the Countryside) and those of the squalid

emergency housing curiously called La Cerisaie (the Cherry Orchard). There was a long way to go from saying it to daring to believe it in earnest and to follow words with action. What was needed were men and women of conviction right inside these hotspots of poverty who choose to live and walk alongside the families there.

You have to understand what it means to be humiliated, considered worthless from generation to generation, to be obliged to accept what social services and charities decide is "for your own good" without knowing your history or getting you out of the situation and letting you be independent, free, and recognised in your human dignity. The poorest families by definition are those who have lost the relationships that would give them a role, a place, however small, in the life of others. Husbands and wives, mothers and fathers in these families suffer from this sort of negation, denial, and almost total uselessness they are made to feel vis-à-vis other people, even within their own milieu and their own families. Neighbours can't do anything for one another; or, in any case, that is what they believe. They feel they are a burden to one another through the quarrels, the violence, the noise, and the confusion, which are not their fault but which always end up generating poverty, when poverty is humiliating and seen by others as something shameful. Spouses are a burden to each other because of chronic unemployment; and love seems futile because it is impossible to do those practical things that protect those you love. Even children seem to be a burden because it is over them that the social service agencies criticise and even threaten you. "If you don't get a job, if you don't change your life, your children will be taken away."

No one cared about mothers in poverty in the West who had their children taken away. No one heard the cries of despair rising from these destitute neighborhoods. In our countries we have taken care to drive these families to the outskirts of our cities, towns, and villages. Economic and social exclusion has become also a physical and geographic exclusion. In France, the poorest families have become, physically, a world apart. Our movement has lifted up the term "Fourth World" both to announce that exclusion exists and to exonerate its victims and proclaim their dignity. This term — Fourth World — says well what it means; namely, that we have expelled the poorest of our fellow human beings into another world where they will no longer burden us.

Families stripped not only of material goods but worse of all possibility of self-respect needed others to come to them and say, "You are eminently worthy of respect. You can achieve anything if you unite". It wasn't enough to say it; we had to prove it in the most convincing way possible: by dedicating our lives.

Today in our movement this gift of self has become an ideal, a conviction underlying all that we do. Today we are an international movement that often goes where no one else wants to go — a clear indication of exclusion. The people there don't need to tell us that they don't just need our resources and programmes, they need us as human beings. We didn't think of this in advance. It was the people in the deepest poverty themselves who taught us.

Loving People Who Are Rejected Leads to Being Rejected

Wishing to devote our lives to an outcast people blamed for their poverty may seem unnecessary in societies where public opinion considers that social problems, even poverty, can be handled by laws, administrations, and professionals. It is even less evident that such a venture is prudent or even valid. People who remain poor in a society where most people eventually attain some comfort and a decent life are soon regarded as rubbish, polluting humankind, as an executive from Asia, not the West, recently said.

Members of our volunteer corps soon learned to their cost that devoting their lives to people considered human refuse would soon themselves be considered with contempt and not be understood even by their own families. This is a precious and private thing which we don't often speak about with other people, but which we wanted to share with you.

Here again, we had nothing worked out in advance. If we had known beforehand how much others would disapprove of us and turn their backs on us, you could have thought us courageous. In fact, we were just ordinary people; what brought us together was quite simply that we had met a population who suffered unreasonably and that we could not tolerate that suffering. We were also united by a sense of humility since most of us had recognised professions or at least a background that included learning, culture, or skills, but that didn't arm us well for combatting extreme poverty. Nothing we had learned or experienced corresponded to what people in these dispossessed places expected, needed, or hoped for.

These young members of the volunteer corps, so ill-equipped for the task and, in addition, scorned by their own families and friends, saw that humility was to be their bridge to the poor. People who were not poor humiliated them and they were torn from the social, familial, and emotional security they had known before. They hadn't chosen that; it was forced on them; and all we can say today is that we are grateful. If we had known in advance, who among us would have dared claim to have the courage? It is perhaps not having known that saved us, those of us who stayed on. For it is true that many left. We didn't have the heart to hold them back. Those who stayed on — and some of them are here today — managed to do so day by day, often painfully, and with no idea of being more courageous than anyone else.

Many of our friends don't know what I am telling you, our African friends; namely, that knowing our own shortcomings, none of us ever claimed to be giving our whole lives forever. The only thing we can claim is that we believe deeply in this gift, that we deeply desire to make it, and that each year we get together to renew a simple promise: the promise to continue to try to give ourselves until next year, until a new promise a year from now.

The truth is that in this way, year by year, the most senior volunteer will soon have been here 25 years. And now there are generations — groups of trainees and of long-term members of the volunteer corps. But for each new group the discoveries, the hard lessons, the breaks with security and status are the same. Each person must experience it individually, and that is a good thing for the unity of our volunteer corps. In any case, it can be protection against self-importance and pride which, when they grow in us, can become the worst enemies of the Fourth World.

The Poorest People, Our Teachers

Fortunately, the poorest families help us understand that our self-assurance, our knowledge, and our professional techniques are inadequate. Again, we are in their debt; they have taught us everything.

They have taught us everything, beginning with their history. You can't share the lives of very poor people if you don't understand their life experiences and those passed on by their parents, grandparents, and ancestors. Not to understand: that is to remain a stranger, never to live as brothers and sisters. For unless you know how a population has lived, you won't understand what it thinks and why.

Again here I could speak about the historical research on poverty done by our movement, and not only historical but also economic, sociological, cultural, and pedagogic. For a number of years now, the work of ATD Fourth World has been taken seriously because people know that it is based on continuing research.

But to you, our African friends, I want to say that it all began very simply on the day when, with a few men and women in a shanty town near Paris, we began to say to the families, "Only you and we together can pull ourselves out of this poverty. No one is going to help us if we don't help ourselves. But in order to overcome it, we must understand each other. In order to change the future, we must understand the past. In short, we have to know your history."

People who don't know us well may think that it was a matter of pedagogy or a strategy for taking action — "conscientisation" as students of Paulo Freire's say. But it was nothing of the sort. We had no method because the situation was well beyond methods. For us, the important thing was to understand this population; to understand these families in order to love them better. We had to enter into their history and to feel deeply their suffering, their joy, their sorrow, and above all their hope. For us, any method has to start with sharing and love.

It wasn't academic — a theory about not being able to overcome extreme poverty without understanding its history. We formulated the theory much later. The steps we took responded to an immediate need; it was the only way of surviving together.

I can tell you the day and the time when our historical research began.

It was late at night in the "Castle of France" and we were listening to a father, Mr Bonnaveau. He said, "You ask me how I came to be here, how we all came here. It's simple. We are here because we have never lived any other way. As a child I was poor and my father was already out of work." That was in 1960. What was he telling us, our friend Mr Bonnaveau, this man emaciated from hunger, his head always lowered, eyes fixed to the ground as if to avoid looking anymore at the world that despised him? He helped us understand that poverty was not a matter of isolated cases, of families hit by chance with sickness or unemployment. He made us realise that the West continued to leave in the wake of its economic progress an age-old destitution for families left behind by industrialisation, urbanisation, and the modernisation of agriculture and the school system. He made us aware that the poorest people,

from the beginnings of the industrialisation of which the West is so proud, had been forgotten and excluded.

Today, Western Europe finally admits that poverty is persistent in our countries. It is because of our movement that research on poverty has been undertaken; but for us it will always be Mr Bonnavau — a father of six children who could never go to school all at the same time because there weren't enough shoes — it will always be this man, who will never be spoken of in universities, who put us on the right track and opened doors to understanding poverty in our countries. It was he who told us. "Don't look into our individual situations or the immediate hardships of our lives; look into our history and then you will understand."

Moreover, modern research using statistics and computers will never be able to say what is said by the thousands of family dossiers, carefully compiled day by day with the families themselves, about their lives and the lives of their parents and ancestors. These are the histories of families, the history of a people chained to the bottom of the social ladder in industrialised countries. The work of our volunteer corps also involves listening and research. Members of the volunteer corps in the field undertake to sit down alone each evening and write all they saw and heard during the day. They also write what they themselves have done. But most important, in order to enter it into the memory of our movement and to think it over, they write all that the families have communicated to them, all that they live and express.

The families themselves have become caught up in this zeal to write in order to understand, to look at the past in order to understand the present. Being able to say everything and to understand it themselves has become their first step toward freedom. To be freed at last from the weight of a past they were made to believe was shameful, to be able to say that it wasn't at all shameful, was to recover their honour.

When people learn to give some order to their experiences and to talk about them; when they can speak up and explain themselves; when they know that there are things to say that only they can say and are important for other people — all those things meant they were finally recognised and they could find a place, play a role, and be useful. Starting from there, families who had been labelled as unsalvageable stood up, participated in developing projects, and began to get together to speak up and to defend the interests of their children.

Sometimes we just remain silent when we hear others say about our movement: "They have a method; they use scientific research; they have techniques for developing programmes and evaluating the results". We get tired of contradicting them and sometimes we are weak-willed, afraid of being taken for dreamers or romantics if we speak the truth. But the truth is what we are sharing with you today: giving back to people in poverty their own history, allowing them to speak, learning from them, and making them our teachers is a step toward liberation that can yield tremendous results. But if this approach — inspired by our love for those treated most unjustly, by respect for their suffering, by a passion to communicate, to share, and to advance with them — if this approach should someday be reduced to a method or a technique, it would soon become a new way of instructing people in poverty

to act as we see fit. But instructing them is the opposite of what we want, because we have chosen the poorest, most scorned people as our teachers.

It may seem ridiculous to say that these destitute men and women could be teachers of humanity. And yet it's true. We must hope that our volunteer corps holds fast to the double truth that the last should be first and the poorest people should be our teachers. We must hope so and help it to come to pass. And who will help us if it isn't friends like you?

To Share a Confidence is to Share a Responsibility

I have confided in you today, on your very first visit, because we want to share with you something that is true, precious, and private. But, as Mr. Hampaté Bâ said to his friend Mr. Modibo Keita, "When we share a secret, we confer a kind of responsibility on the person with whom we share it."

You could say the same to me, and perhaps you would have preferred to hear something else today about our programmes, our collaboration with governments, and our consultative status with international organisations. I could have told you, for example, that in France and other industrialised countries we have some sixty grass-roots projects; and that in the European Community alone, not counting Greece,¹ we defend the cause of eight million excluded men, women, and children. For some years now we have been receiving calls from developing countries; we have teams in Guatemala and Thailand and we are taking exploratory steps in Upper Volta [later Burkina Faso] and Ivory Coast. We are also supporting local projects in India, Senegal, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere. We are undertaking all of these with about 290 members and trainees of the volunteer corps of twelve nationalities and all occupations who are supported by tens of thousands of adherents in 48 countries around the world.

But all of that is public knowledge and you can read it in our publications. And, of course, you are free to ask questions on any of these subjects. But perhaps you would not have thought to ask about the things I did speak of. They concern not so much what we do but rather what we are, and that is always more difficult to say and also more difficult to ask.

In Conclusion

As Mr. Hampaté Bâ says, to speak in this way to you is also to appeal to you. Tell us what you think; think with us; advise us; watch us; become our real friends. If there is any truth and authenticity in what our movement wants and tries to do, who is better than you to discern it?

Who knows better than you what it means to have your history, identity, and inalienable riches as human beings and as peoples ignored? Who better than you can understand why the poorest, most excluded people worldwide need their history to be reconstructed with them and need their voices to be heard, not because others want to teach them but because they need to be taught by them?

¹ Available statistics did not include Greece, which joined the European Community in 1981.

Who better than you, men and women of Africa, can become defenders of excluded people on all continents? Who could speak with more authority, with more experience?

That is why we turn to you. Other people speak of helping you. You yourselves are sometimes tormented by seeing your own people obliged to hold out their hands and to thank whoever offers aid. Our movement has not thought of you in these terms.

We are the ones who have something to ask of you; we hold out our hand to receive something: your trust, your wisdom, and, God willing, your friendship.

Joseph Wresinski