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«It's good to leave each day behind, like flowing water, free of sadness. Yesterday is gone and its tale told. Today new seeds are growing.»

Rumi. Sufi mystic from Afghanistan and one of the most important Persian poets of the Middle Ages.

Dear Sponsors

When I look back on the past twenty-four years, I keep on realising that time passes far too quickly. And when I try to take stock, I think that each day should have had more than 24 hours, each month more than four weeks, and each year more than twelve months, in order to cope with all that we should and still want to do here.

Yes, having more time would be nice, but getting it is impossible. What is possible, however, is to make the best of the time we have been given. And we were allowed to do a lot, and it makes us grateful to think of all the people we were allowed to accompany, to remember how much joy and love we were allowed to experience, but also to distribute and still are allowed to do so.

SYLVIE AND CARO

Today I would like to tell you about a fate that is very close to me. You surely remember our Sylvie, who was a nanny with us. Our orphans loved her because she was a calm, kind and tender surrogate mother. When I became aware that her right arm

and leg were becoming less and less obedient, we took her to a neurologist who eventually diagnosed multiple sclerosis.

The disease progressed quickly and it was not long before we had to admit Sylvie as a patient in our hospice. Every weekend her then still young daughter Caro, who lived with an aunt, came to visit her mother. Caro grew older, and still she came to us every weekend and especially during vacations and holidays and took care of Sylvie with a lot of love. At night she would snuggle up to her and they would both fall asleep peacefully, tightly embraced. Towards the end, Sylvie couldn't even speak - instead she blinked her eyelids: Blinking once meant «yes,» blinking twice meant «no.» With a lot of patience and perseverance and an incredible love, Caro took care of her. Gave her food, washed her, held her hand. She - not yet twenty years old - became her mother's nurse.

Sylvie eventually became a quadriplegic. She spent a whole ten years in our hospice. After she died,



Caro, then 16 years old, with her mother Sylvie

Caro, who was by then working on her master's degree in journalism, still came to us. She said that Centre L'Espoir had become her home. As a matter of course, she continued to go to the wards and take care of our patients there, just as she had done with her mother. In the meantime, she also sits at the bedside of dying people to accompany them on their last journey. Caro has become a part of us and helps us to do what is most important in life: to care for the weak and sick. Caro is a blessing to us all.

She made it perfectly clear what charity means when she started caring for the dying Aude a few weeks ago. Aude was brought to us by her mother. When I stepped into the treatment room, a faint «Bonjour Maman Lotti» came to me. Astonished, I bent over the delicate little creature and asked, «You know me?», «Yes», she answered softly, «I've known you since I was four years old. Back in Adjouffou you took care of me. That was twenty

years ago.» Her mother then explained to me that we had diagnosed Aude with what is known as sickle cell anaemia, a hereditary disease with a high mortality rate in which the red blood cells become deformed in a sickle shape. I took a closer look at Aude and realised that this young, beautiful woman, emaciated to the skin, would die with us. I took her in my arms as best I could, caressed her and said that I considered myself very lucky that she still recognised me after twenty years, and as we sat there Caro came in, stopped at the door as if petrified, and began to cry. «Caro, what is it?», I asked her. And she replied, «She looks so much like my mother.» She came closer and I introduced the two of them. «Lotti, may I take care of Aude?», Caro then wanted to know, and since then she has been sitting by Aude's bed for hours, washing her, feeding her, calming her fears, comforting her, in a way I couldn't do better.



The dying Aude, 24 years old, nursed by Caro

We try not to look back too often, but to look forward. People need our support, our appreciation, our respect in the here and now. We have had a lot of work in the last few months. Again and again people come to us where it is clear that they will take their last breath with us because they are terminally ill. I would like to tell you about one of these people. Chantal, who is seriously ill. From her I never hear even a moan, never even the question «Why me?». Chantal has such great trust in God



Love is greater than anything else

that she accepts everything that comes her way, the immense pain as well as her total dependence on us carers. Of course, we do everything we can to make her suffering a little more bearable. I often sit at her bedside and read to her from the Bible or a little book of poems. Once I surprised her at a time when she was not expecting me. She was «reading» the Bible, but holding it upside down. We have known Chantal for many years and I know that she can read and write very well. Laughing, I told her, «You're holding the book upside down!». She replied, «Oh, I didn't even notice.» Like an arrow, it went through my heart. Obviously, she needed glasses, but never told us and we never thought of it. Immediately I called an optician, explained that this patient could not come to him, and asked him to make an effort to come to us. And he came with his suitcase full of measuring instruments, and a few hours later Chantal had glasses and the Bible properly in her hand again. The optician didn't write a bill, he said he wanted to do something good! And Chantal is happy, although she is actually dying. And my heart is full of gratitude to be able to witness such small miracles over and over again!

The photo was taken on Sunday morning, 14 May. In the afternoon of the same day, Chantal really wanted to sit in a wheelchair. I told her that sitting upright could cause her to have a cardiac arrest because she was so weak. But nothing could be done, she insisted. We knew it was a risky business, so she was carefully lifted up by three people and then placed in her chair, well supported on all sides with pillows and blankets. I wish you could have seen how proud and upright our Chantal sat there. Like a queen! She turned her head from side to side, really majestic. After five minutes we took her blood pressure and pulse and made it clear to her: «This is not going well Chantal, we have to get you back to bed.» But she had other things on her mind: «Please just one more minute, I know I'll never be able to sit down again!» We accepted her last wish and then put her back to bed. Hours later, at sunrise on Monday, she passed away. The birds awoke and we were around her in prayer and song. «My beautiful Chantal, your life was not a happy one. But you gave us so much happiness, you taught us a beautiful lesson about life, courage, being. Rest in peace!»



And even the little ones care for each other

Dear sponsors, I hope you are all well and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your help, thank you for your trust and thank you again and again for believing in us!

God bless you - I wish you all the best.

With respectful greetings

Lotti Latrous

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