

Interview with André – Part 1

This work that you do is very important.
See, I was a person – like many – who lived on the street.
I used to go through all those difficulties that you see everyday.
I wasn't better or worse than any of them, my life was destroyed.
Everything had gone wrong in my life.
I lost trust from others, lost my family and my friends.
For me, it was like there was no more love.

When I was on the streets, I saw people in Christmas doing campaigns and nice things.
So they could be seen by people and be thought of as “nice”.
At Derby I saw women who would walk by us everyday and they never gave us anything – not one piece of bread.
Then at Christmas they would show up and donate things because of the reporters who were there filming the donations.
All of this just so they could look nice and pretty. I was really sick of that.

So many people trying to “help”, but really it was just to promote themselves.
Or to promote “Church A” or “Church B”.
Or to promote some this or that project they were involved in.
Because of all that I just stayed on my own.
So I never got close, never got involved.
Because of all this stuff I had seen I didn't want to get involved, didn't want to ask for things, for help.
But in your case, when I went by on Sundays, it was different. Why?
Because I saw you and the people you were with and I saw it was something so natural.
What I saw was different – it wasn't just a “Here son, take this” with a pat on the head and a goodbye.

The first time I went there, I noticed that you got involved with the people.
You had something more with the people.
You really cared about the people, you were concerned about them.
And what most caught my attention was this:
You knew the peoples names.

I saw you ask a car washer's wife for him, and you asked “Where is ‘so-and-so?’”
So I thought to myself “Hey, this guy isn't like all the others, he knows the people.”
And that made me see that there was really something different about you, and that what you were doing was different. And that made me come more often.

But I always had my feet on the ground... I thought that that love didn't exist.
I still thought that this “helping the people” deal was just people's way of trying to impress society. So others would think “Wow, beautiful work, beautiful job”

But after I saw that, me and my friends went off to get high – me, Luciano, Cristiano, you know them. I brought up the subject “What about this brother Dennis, tell me about this brother.”

And they said that “Brother Dennis is a blessing, he is a man of God”
“He’s with us, he cares about us.”

And these were positive comments from negative people, people who usually speak very badly about others. We would be getting high and they’d be saying bad things.

So I started going to Derby sometimes, and one day I went over and I wasn’t doing well.

I was very sad, very tired of that miserable life that I was living, so I went there. On that day, I didn’t go for the food, I didn’t want anything, I just wanted to hear The Word.

I knew that in Derby there was a worship service, so I went there.

But I was so down - in such a bad place – that I decided to keep a little distance between the group and me.

And I saw you delivering a message and you always do, and on that day you said that we are all equal.

That message really touched my heart because on that day I was feeling so down. I had seen a news report on that day about social inequality, that it is a problem the Government hasn’t been able to solve.

The news report talked about all these different social groups.

And I realized I wasn’t in any of the social groups they cited. Not one of them!

I understood then that I didn’t have a place in society. I really was an outcast!

I saw other people like me and that made me upset.

So when I went to Derby that day, that’s what was going through my mind.

I had heard about “Group A”, “Group B”, and “C” and “D”, but my reality was never even mentioned.

So, for the people who were evaluating the population of Brazil – I didn’t even exist!
And that made me feel less than nothing...

End of Part I