

April 2020

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe (Jn 20: 29).

The Gospel of John describes the occasions when the risen Jesus appeared to the apostles, to Mary Magdalene and to the other disciples. Jesus bore the marks of the crucifixion but his appearances filled the hearts of those who saw him with joy and hope again. On one of these occasions, the apostle Thomas was missing. The others, who had seen the Lord, told him about this wonderful experience, perhaps because they wanted to transmit the same joy to him. Thomas, however, could not accept the testimony of others; he wanted to see and touch Jesus for himself.

And this is what happened a few days later: Jesus appeared again to a group of disciples when Thomas was present. The latter proclaimed his faith, his total belonging to the risen one, by saying, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus answered him:

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.

This Gospel was written after the eyewitnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus had died. The transmission of the Gospel message to subsequent generations was based on the testimony of those who, in their turn, had received the proclamation. Herein lies the beginning of the Church, the people of God who continue to proclaim the message of Jesus by faithfully transmitting and living his word.

We too have met Jesus, the Gospel and the Christian faith through the words and witness of others and we have believed. For this reason 'we are blessed'.

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To live this word it is helpful to recall a passage written by Focolare founder, Chiara Lubich: *'He wants to confirm in us – and in everyone who did not live at the same time as Jesus – the belief that we all share in the same reality as the apostles. Jesus wants to tell us that we are not at a disadvantage in comparison with those who actually saw him. The fact is we have faith and this is the new way of "seeing" Jesus. With faith we can approach him, understand him and meet him in the depths of our heart. With faith we can discover him when two or more people are united in his name, or in the Church which is his continuation. [...] These words of Jesus are an invitation to revive our faith, not to wait for support or signs of progress in our spiritual lives and not to doubt the presence of Christ in our lives and in history, even though he may seem far away from us. [...] He wants us to believe in his love, even*

*if we find ourselves in difficult situations or if impossible circumstances prevail upon us.*¹

Anne is a young Australian woman who was born with a severe disability. She says, 'During my adolescence, I wondered why I was still alive because the burden of my disability was so great. My parents, who live the Word of Life, always gave me the same answer, "Anne, God loves you immensely and has a special plan for you." They helped me avoid being closed in on myself and totally blocked by my physical difficulties. They encouraged me to "be the first to love" as God had done with us. I have seen that many situations around me have changed: people have become more open towards me and towards others. My father gave me a personal message that he told me to open after his death. He had written just one sentence, "My night has no darkness." It is my daily experience: every time I choose to love and serve those around me, there is no more darkness and I can experience the love that God has for me.'

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¹ Chiara Lubich Word of Life April 1980