

# Word of Life

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*With the Holy Spirit's help, this month every time we interact with others, no matter what it is, let us too remember and practise the words of love: welcome, listen, empathize, dialogue, encourage, include, care, forgive, appreciate the other...*

## **As the Father has sent me, so I send you (Jn 20: 21)**

In the days following Jesus' crucifixion, his disciples stayed indoors, fearful and confused. They had followed him along the roads of Palestine, where he proclaimed God's tender love for each person. Jesus had been sent by the Father, not only to give witness to this love, but also to open for humanity the path to God. He revealed a God who is Trinity, who is a communion of love in himself, and who wants to gather all into this embrace.

During the time of his mission, many people saw, heard and experienced Jesus' good works, his words of welcome, forgiveness and hope ... But then came his condemnation and crucifixion. This is the context in St John's Gospel, where we are told how after he rose again on the third day Jesus appeared to his disciples and sent them out to continue his mission.

## **As the Father has sent me, so I send you**

It is as if he said, 'Do you remember how I shared my life with you? How I satisfied your hunger and thirst for justice and for peace? How I healed the hearts and bodies of so many marginalized people, the outcasts of society? How I defended the dignity of the poor, widows and foreigners? Now you must continue: proclaim the Gospel you have received to everyone. Tell them that God wishes to be met and known by all. Tell them that you are all brothers and sisters.'

Each person, created in the image and likeness of God, who is Love, longs for this encounter. All cultures and societies strive to build relationships of community. But how challenging it is, how many difficulties and obstacles there are to reaching this goal! Every day this deep aspiration runs up against our weakness, our narrowmindedness and fears, our mistrust and judgement of each other. Yet the Lord, with great trust, goes on saying to us as he did in the past:

## **As the Father has sent me, so I send you**

How can we respond to such a bold invitation? Doesn't the mission of creating fraternity in a fractured world seem like fighting a losing battle?

On our own we will never make it. That is why Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit, as a special gift who sustains our efforts to love each person, even if that person is an enemy.

In a commentary on the Word of Life from 1994, Focolare founder Chiara Lubich wrote, 'The Holy Spirit, given to us through baptism ... is the spirit of love and unity, who made all believers one in the risen Lord and with one another, overcoming every difference of race, culture and social class ... Our selfishness builds barriers of isolation and excludes those who are different from us ... So, by listening to the Holy Spirit's voice, let us try to grow in this fellowship ... overcoming the seeds of division carried within us.'

With the Holy Spirit's help this month, every time we interact with others, no matter what it is, let us too remember and practice the words of love: welcome, listen, empathize, dialogue, encourage, include, care, forgive, appreciate someone ... In this way, we accept Jesus' invitation to continue his mission, and we will be channels of the life he gave us.

This was the experience of a group of Buddhist monks visiting the international town of Loppiano, Italy, where its eight hundred inhabitants try to live the Gospel faithfully. They were deeply touched by experiencing Gospel love for the first time.

In 1998, Chiara remembered how one of them said: 'I put my dusty shoes outside the door; in the morning I found them clean. I put my dirty clothes outside the door; in the morning, I found them washed and ironed. Others knew that I was cold, because I was from Southeast Asia; they raised the temperature and brought me blankets ... One day, I asked, "Why are you doing this?" "Because we love you, because we love you very much," was the answer.' This experience paved the way for genuine dialogue between Buddhists and Christians.

## **Suggested Meditation:**

Many.... one body

From the Book:  
Knowing How to Lose  
Page 93

New City  
London 1981

## **Next Month**

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11: 28)