

Focolare Word of Life - May 2017

“I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mt 28:20)

Matthew ends his Gospel with the final events of Jesus' life on earth. Jesus has risen from the dead, having fulfilled his mission. He had proclaimed God's healing love for all, reopening the way that leads to fraternity. Matthew sees Jesus as Emmanuel, “God with us,” the one promised by the prophets and awaited by the people of Israel.

Before returning to the Father, Jesus gathers together his disciples, the group who had most closely shared in his mission. He entrusts them with continuing his work — a tough assignment!

But Jesus reassures them. He will not leave them on their own. Indeed, he promises to be with them every day, to support, accompany and encourage them “to the end of the age.”

With his help, they will bear witness to meeting him, to his word and his acts of welcome and mercy toward all. In this way, many others will meet him and together form the new people of God, founded upon the commandment of love.

We could say that God's joy is to be with me, with you, with us every day to the end of our individual lives and to the end of human history.

But is that true? Can we really encounter him?

In a Word of Life commentary from 1982, Focolare founder Chiara Lubich wrote, “He is around the corner; he is next to me and to you. He hides himself in the poor, the despised, little ones, the sick, the person seeking advice, or deprived of freedom. He is in the ugly and the marginalized ... As he said, ‘I was hungry and you gave me food’ (Mt 25:35) ... Let's learn how to find him where he is.”

He is in his Word, which, if put into practice, renews our lives. All over the world he is in the Eucharist. He also works through his ministers, the servants of his people. He is present when we are in agreement among us (see Mt 18:20). Our prayer to the Father then becomes more effective, and we find light for our daily decisions.

“I am with you always, to the end of the age.” How much hope this promise gives us! It encourages us to find him as we go along our way. Let's open our hearts, and our arms too, to be welcoming and to share. Let's do this personally and as communities, in our families and our churches, in our workplaces and on festive occasions, in our civil and religious associations. We will meet Jesus, and he will amaze us with joy and with light, the signs of his presence.

If we start each morning thinking, “Today I want to discover where God wants to meet me!” we too will have wonderful experiences like this one shared in *Glimpses of Gospel Life*:

“My husband's mother deeply cared about her son, even to the point of being jealous. A year ago she was diagnosed with cancer, and her only daughter was not able to give her the level of care and help she needed.

“During that time, I went to a summer gathering of the Focolare called a Mariapolis, where I encountered God's love in a way that changed my life.

“The first fruit of this conversion was the decision to ask my mother-in-law to come and live with us, setting aside all my fears about it. The light that had been lit in my heart made me see her with new eyes. Now I knew that it was Jesus in her that I cared for and helped.

“To my surprise, she responded to all I did with just as much love. Months of sacrifice went by, but when my mother-in-law passed gently on to the next life, she left us all with a deep sense of peace.

“It was around that time that I realized I was pregnant, after nine years of waiting! This child was a tangible sign of God's love for us.”

Read more:

- Lubich, Chiara. “Jesus in our neighbor,” *The Art of Loving*. New City Press: Hyde Park, New York, 2010, pp. 103-110.
- Lubich, Chiara. “The Word that gives life,” *Essential Writings*. New City Press: Hyde Park, New York, 2007, pp. 120-128.

Next month:

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21).

Each month the Focolare offers a Scripture passage as a guide and inspiration for daily living. Focolare’s founder, Chiara Lubich (1920–2008), wrote these commentaries for many years. Now an international commission continues this tradition, faithful to her spirituality of unity. Letizia Magri, an expert in marriage and family from the John Paul II Institute in Rome, is head of this commission and part of the Focolare’s center for the family. This Word of Life is translated into 96 different languages and reaches several million people worldwide through the media. This monthly leaflet is also a supplement to *Living City*, the Focolare magazine (livingcitymagazine.com). For information and to subscribe to this leaflet or to the magazine, write to: Living City, 202 Comforter Blvd, Hyde Park, NY 12538; tel: 845-229-0496; e-mail: livingcity@livingcitymagazine.com. Visit focolare.org (international) or focolare.us (U.S.).
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