

Word of Life – August 2016

The words of the Gospel shape our lives and give us God's own life, if we live them. If we share what we experience with others, it does not only nourish them, it gives us life too.

You have one teacher, and you are all students. Mt 23:8

By now we have been living the Word of Life for seventy years. The text comes to us and we read the commentary. But what we hope will remain is the sentence that is offered, a word of Scripture, often from Jesus. The 'Word of Life' is not simply a meditation, but Jesus speaks in it. He invites us to live, always bringing us to love, to make a gift of our lives.

It was an 'invention' of Chiara Lubich, who speaks of its origins like this: 'I was hungry for truth, and I studied philosophy. Indeed, more than that: like many other young people I sought truth and I believed I would find it in study. But then came one of those great ideas from the early times of the Movement, which I immediately communicated to my companions, "What point is there in looking for truth when it lives incarnate in Jesus, the God-man? If the truth attracts us, let's leave everything, let's look for Him, and let's follow Him." And that is what we did.'

They took the Gospel into their hands and began reading it word by word. They found it completely new. 'Each word of Jesus was a burst of brightly shining light, all divine! ... His words were *unique, eternal ... fascinating*, fashioned with a *divine form*... they were *words of life*, to be translated into life, *universal* words in the midst of space and time.' They discovered them not to be stuck in the past, not a mere memory, but words that He continuously speaks to us, as He does to each person in every time and place.¹

Yet is Jesus truly our Teacher?

We are surrounded by many proposals for our lives, by many teachers of thought, some of them twisted that even lead to violence, while others are straight and enlightening. And yet the words of Jesus have a depth and an ability to attract and move us that other words, whether they be of philosophers, politicians, or poets, do not have. They are 'words of life'; they can be lived, and they give us the fullness of life; they communicate God's own life.

Each month we focus on one, so that, bit by bit the Gospel penetrates our spirit, transforms us, makes us acquire Jesus's very own thought, so that we are able to respond to the most widely different situations. Jesus shows himself to be our Teacher.

At times we can read the Gospel together. We would like Jesus himself, the Risen Lord, living in the midst of those who are gathered in his name, to explain it, to make it current for us, to suggest how we can put it into practice.

The really new thing about the 'Word of Life', however, is that we can share our experiences, the graces given when we live it, just as Chiara explained when speaking of what happened in the early times which are still with us now: 'We felt we had a duty to communicate to others what we had experienced, also because we were aware that by *giving it* an experience remained and built up our inner life, while, if we did not give it, bit by bit our soul was impoverished. The word was therefore lived intensely all day long and the results were communicated not only among us, but with those who joined the first group.... When it was lived, it was no longer I or we

¹*Scritti spirituali*, vol. 3 (Rome: Città Nuova, 1979), p. 124.

who lived, but the word lived in me, the word lived in the group. And this was the Christian revolution with all of its consequences.²

It can be like this today for us too.

Fabio Ciardi

Forgiveness

Our oldest son, previously very good at school, was no longer doing well in class.

The first semester's results were disastrous. But worse still there was a wall between us. We understood that because we were proud of having a very clever son, our hearts didn't bother about understanding him, to trust him. We deal with him very severely. Every time he made a mistake he knew that a tough punishment would follow. I felt I had betrayed his trust. I no longer was the mother who knew how to love him, who had a beautiful relationship with him. It's not easy to recognize our own wrongs, but I asked him for forgiveness, for the words that wounded him, for my harsh attitude.

He looked at me. I felt the time to express himself, he too asked for forgiveness from us and the teachers. Now he is no longer afraid of sharing his school results. On my behalf, I understood we have to leave room for forgiveness in order to relieve the personal and family tension created by evil.

U.A.

² Ibid. pp. 128, 130.