

## **Word of Life: July 2016**

*Giving an amnesty to one another, forgiving one another totally and each day, we can grow in the kindness that mirrors God's mercy to us.*

### **Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you (Eph 4:32)**

There is nothing more wonderful than hearing someone say to you: 'I love you.' When someone loves us we don't feel alone, we walk secure, we are able also to face difficulties and critical situations. If then our being loved becomes mutual, hope and trust are reinforced, and we feel protected. We all know that children, to grow well, need to be surrounded by an environment that is full of love, and to have someone who loves them. But this is true at any age. For this reason the Word of Life invites us to be 'kind' to one another, which is to say to love one another, and it gives God himself as a model.

It is precisely his example that reminds us that loving one another is not mere sentiment. It is an extremely concrete and demanding 'desire for the good of the other'. In Jesus God has come close to the sick and the poor, has felt compassion for the crowds, has had mercy on sinners, and has forgiven those who crucified him.

For us, too, wanting the good of others means listening to them, showing them sincere attention, sharing their joys and trials, taking care of them, walking with them along their way. The other person is never a stranger, but a brother or sister who belongs to me, who I wish to serve. The exact opposite of what happens when we see others as rivals, competitors, enemies, to the point of wanting their harm, to the point of crushing them, even eliminating them, as sadly we are told in the news happens day by day. Even though we may not go so far, don't we also accumulate grudges, distrust, hostility or simple indifference towards persons who have hurt us or who we find unpleasant or who do not belong to our social circle?

Wanting the good of one another, the Word of Life teaches us, means following the path of mercy, ready to forgive one another every time we slip up. Talking of this, Chiara Lubich tells us about the experience at the beginning of her new Christian community. In order to put Jesus's command into practice, she and her first companions made a pact of mutual love. And yet, despite this, 'especially in the early times it was not always easy for a group of girls to live the love radically. We were people like anyone else, even if we were sustained by a special gift of God and, among us, on our relationships, dust could gather and unity could weaken. This is what happened, for example, when we realized the shortcomings, the imperfections, of the others and we judged them, so that the current of mutual love grew cold.

'In reaction to this situation one day we thought would make pact among us that we called the "pact of mercy". We decided every morning to see each neighbour we met – in our focolare house, at school, at work and so on – as new, as really new, without remembering at all the other's flaws, the other's defects, but covering everything with love. It was a matter of meeting everyone with this complete amnesty in our hearts, with this universal pardon. It was a powerful commitment, taken by all of us together, that helped us always to be the first in loving in imitation of God who is merciful, who forgives and forgets.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>*Love of neighbour*, Talk given to Muslim friends, Castel Gandolfo, 1 November 2002.

A pact of mercy! Could not this be a way of growing in kindness?

*Fabio Ciardi*