

Word of Life September 2016

We can bring all things as a gift to God, if we learn how to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep, transforming each pain into love.

'All belong to you, and you belong to Christ' (1 Cor 3:22-23).

The setting of these words is the Christian community in Corinth. It was extremely lively, full of initiative, animated by groups linked to different charismatic leaders. This also gave rise to tensions among individuals and groups, to divisions, personality cults, the desire to dominate. Paul intervened decisively and reminded everyone that, in the richness and variety of gifts and leaders belonging to the community, something much deeper bound them in unity: belonging to God.

Once more the great Christian proclamation rings out: God is with us, and we are not lost, orphaned, abandoned to ourselves, but, as God's children, we are God's. As a true Father God cares for each one, without letting us lack anything we need for our good. Indeed, God is superabundant in love and in giving, as Paul affirms: 'The world, life, death, the present, the future—all belong to you!' God has even given us his Son, Jesus.

What huge trust on God's part in giving each thing into our hands! How often instead have we abused his gifts! We have believed ourselves to be the lords of creation to the point of plundering and despoiling it, lords of our brothers and sisters to the point of enslaving and slaughtering them, lords of our own lives to the point of wasting them in narcissism and self-destruction.

God's huge gift – 'All belong to you' – asks for gratitude. Often we complain about what we don't have and we only turn to God to ask. Why don't we look around and discover the beauty and the goodness surrounding us? Why don't we say thank you to God for what he gives us each day?

This 'All belong to you' is also a responsibility. It demands our attention, our tenderness, our care for all that has been entrusted to us: the whole world and every human being, the same care that Jesus has for us ('you belong to Christ'), the same care that the Father has for Jesus ('Christ belongs to God').

We ought to know how to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep, ready to gather up every groan, division, pain, violence, as something that belongs to us, so as to share it, to the point of transforming it into love. Everything has been given to us so that we bring it to Christ, that is, to the fullness of life, and to God, that is, to its final goal, giving back the dignity and the deepest meaning that belong to each thing and to each person.

One day in the summer of 1949, Chiara Lubich sensed such a unity with Christ that she felt bound to him as a bride to her Spouse. This led her to think of the dowry she would bring, and she understood that it should be the whole of creation! On his side, he would bring her as his inheritance the whole of Paradise. She remembered then the words of the psalm: 'Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.' (Ps 2:8) And she commented: 'And we believed and we asked and He gave us all things that we may bring them to Him and He will give us Heaven: we the created, He the Uncreated.'

Towards the end of her life, speaking of the Movement to which she had given life and in which she saw herself reflected, Chiara Lubich wrote: 'What, just now, would be my last wish? I wish that the Work of Mary [that is, the Focolare Movement], at the end of the ages, when it will be waiting, united, to appear before Jesus forsaken and risen, may be able to repeat to him, making its

own the words of the Belgian theologian Jacques Leclercq, words I always find moving: “On your day, my God, I shall come to you.... I shall come to you, my God ... with my wildest dream: to bring you the world in my arms.”¹

Fabio Ciardi

Red beet juice

«Cristina, a widow for some years now, has never given up in the face of difficulties that arose after her husband’s death. In fact, she doubled her commitment to help others. Her colleague at work, also a widow, was not liked by the others because of her ways. One day, seeing her very pale face, Cristina asked her what was wrong. The colleague answered vaguely that she was not well and was taking a lot of medicine. So Cristina started to prepare a bottle of red beet juice for her every week. Surprised by all this caring, the colleague confided to Cristina: “I think that the force you have in going towards others is a gift from God, unlike me because I only lived on anger and pain after my husband’s death. This is the real disease I have.”»

C.K. Hungary

¹*Essential Writings*, (London and New York: New City and New City Press, 2007), p. 369.