

WORD OF LIFE - March 2017

"... be reconciled to God." (2 Cor 5:20)

In many parts of the globe there are wars involving much bloodshed which never seem to end and in which families, tribes and peoples are caught up. Gloria, who is 20 years old, told us: "We heard that a village had been burned and many people were left without anything. My friends and I began to collect things they needed: mattresses, clothes and food. We set off and after eight hours journey we found the people who had suffered this desolation. We listened to their stories, dried their tears, embraced them and comforted them... One family told us: "Our little girl was in the house when they set fire to it and we feel that we have died with her. Now, with your love, we have the strength to forgive the people who did it!"

St Paul the apostle also had an experience. He, the very person who was persecuting Christians¹, encountered God's freely given love in a completely unexpected way. God then sent him out in his name² as an ambassador of reconciliation.

St Paul then became a passionate and credible witness to the mystery of Jesus who died and rose from the dead; to Jesus who reconciled the world to himself so that all people could know and experience the life of fellowship with him and with their neighbours³. Through St Paul, the Gospel message reached and attracted even pagans, who were considered to be those furthest from salvation: be reconciled to God!

We too, despite the mistakes which discourage us, and false certainties which make us think we don't need it, can let God's mercy – his love beyond measure – heal our hearts and make us free at last to share this treasure with others. In this way we will contribute to fulfilling God's plan for peace for the whole of humanity and all of creation, a plan which overcomes the contradictions of history, as Chiara Lubich said in one of her writings:

"There on the cross, in the death of his Son, God gave us the supreme proof of his love. Through Christ's cross, he reconciled us to himself. This fundamental truth of our faith is fully relevant today.

It is the revelation that all humankind is waiting for. Yes, God is close to all with his love and he loves each person with an immense love. Our world needs to hear this proclamation, but we can proclaim God's love if we do so first of all, again and again, to ourselves. We need to feel surrounded by this love, even when everything would make us think the opposite ... All our behaviour should make this truth we proclaim credible.

Jesus said clearly that before bringing our offering to the altar we should be reconciled with a brother or sister if they have anything against us (Cf Mt 5:23-24). So let's love one another as he loved us, without exceptions or prejudice, but being open, welcoming and appreciating the positive values our neighbour has, and being ready to give our lives for each other. This is Jesus' main command; it is the "badge" Christians are recognised by, which is as valid today as it was in the times of Christ's first followers. Living this word means becoming reconcilers."

¹ Cf. Acts 22:4ff

² Cf. Cor 5:20

³ Cf. Eph 2:13ff

Living like this we will enrich our days with gestures of friendship and reconciliation, in our family and among families, in our Church and among the Churches, in every civil and religious community we belong to.

Letizia Magri