

Word of life for November 2017

“The greatest among you will be your servant.” (Mt 23:11).

Jesus was speaking to the crowds that followed him, telling them what was new about the lifestyle of those who want to be his disciples, a way of life “against the current”ⁱ in comparison to the usual way of thinking. In his day (and today too) it was easy to talk in high moral terms and then not live accordingly, seeking prestige in society, wanting to be seen or using others for personal advantage. Jesus asks his disciples to have a completely different logic when relating to others, as he himself had:

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At a meeting with people who wanted to discover how to live the Gospel, Chiara Lubich shared her spiritual experience: “We must keep our gaze fixed on the one Father of so many children, and then consider all people as children of that one Father. ... Jesus, who is our model, taught us two things that are ultimately one: to be children of our one Father and to be brothers and sisters to one another. ... God was calling us to universal brotherhood and sisterhood.”ⁱⁱ “This is what is new, to love everyone just as Jesus did, because all people – you and me and every person on the face of the earth – are children of God, who have always been loved and wanted by him. In this way, we discover that the brother or sister we should love in concrete ways, with our muscles too, is every single person we meet on a daily basis. This means my dad, my mother in law, my youngest child and my rebellious child. It means someone in prison, a street beggar, someone who is disabled, my manager and the cleaners at work. It means my colleague in a political party and the person who has different political opinions. It means people of our faith and culture and foreigners. The characteristically Christian attitude towards each brother or sister is to serve him or her.

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Chiara went on: “To strive for the primacy of the Gospel by putting ourselves at the service of everyone. ... And what is the best way to serve? To make ourselves one with everyone we meet, feeling what they feel within ourselves: helping as though their problems were our own, made ours by love ... No longer living just thinking of ourselves but seeking to bear other people’s burdens and to share their joys”.ⁱⁱⁱ

Each of our skills and good points, all that we might feel “great” about is an opportunity to serve that must not be lost. Our experience at work, our artistic skills, our knowledge, but also being able to laugh or make people laugh; the time given to listening to someone who is unsure what to do or in difficulty. The energy of youth, but also the power of prayer, when physical strength is less.

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Sooner or later, this selfless Gospel love kindles within the heart of our brothers and sisters the same desire to share, renewing relationships in the family, the parish, in workplaces and places where people relax, laying the foundations for a new society. This is the experience shared by Hermez, a teenager from the Middle East: “It was Sunday and as soon as I woke up I asked Jesus to help me love all day long. I realised my parents had gone to Mass and it occurred to me to clean and tidy the house. I tried to do everything well, even putting some flowers on the table! Then I prepared breakfast and set the table. When they came back, my parents were surprised and happy seeing all I had done. That Sunday, breakfast together was especially happy; we spent time talking about many things and I was able to share many experiences I had had that week. That small act of love had set the tone for a fantastic day!”

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ⁱ Cf Mt 23: 1-11

ⁱⁱ Chiara Lubich “Unity at the start of the Focolare Movement” – Payerne (Switzerland) 26th September 1982

iii Ibid.