

February 2024

Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Cor. 16:14)ⁱ

This month, the word and experience of the apostle Paul can guide us and be a lamp for our steps.ⁱⁱ

He proclaims a powerful message to us just as he did to the Christians in Corinth; he announces that charity, agape and the selfless love as found among brother and sisters lie at the heart of the Gospel.

Our Word of Life is part of this letter's conclusion. It frequently refers to the importance of charity and explains it in all its nuances: it is patient, benevolent, loves truth and does not seek its own interests ...ⁱⁱⁱ

Mutual love lived out in this way in the Christian community is balm for the divisions that always threaten it and is a sign of hope for all humanity.

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It is striking that in the Greek text, Paul exhorts us to act as a consequence of "being in love," as if to direct us towards a permanent state of being - a dwelling in God who is Love.

For how can we welcome each other, how can we be open towards each person we meet if we do not acknowledge that God took the initiative in loving us just as we are, complete with our frailties and failures?

A renewed awareness of God's love enables us to have no fear in being open to others, discerning their needs and standing alongside them, sharing material and spiritual resources.

Let's look at how Jesus did this as he is our model.

He was always the first to give: "... health to the sick, forgiveness to sinners, life to us all. He contrasted a selfish instinct to hoard with an attitude of generosity; he challenged focus upon personal needs with attention to others and the desire to possess with a culture of giving. It does not matter whether we can give a lot or a little. What matters is how we give, how much love we put into even the smallest things we do for another person. ... Love is essential because it knows how to approach others even if all we have to offer is our availability to

listen or to serve. How important ... it is to try to 'be love' beside each person. It is the most direct way to enter their hearts and raise their spirits."^{iv}

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This Word teaches us to approach others with respect, without falsehood, with creativity, making room for their best aspirations, so that each person can make a contribution to the common good.

It helps us to value all the practical aspects of daily life: "... from household tasks, work in industrial units or on the land, duties in an office or school, to civil, religious and political responsibilities we may undertake. Everything can be transformed into attentive and caring service".^v

Let's imagine a series of images showing simple gestures inspired by the Gospel. Here are two examples.

Two parents write, "When a very distressed neighbour told us that her son was in prison, we agreed to visit him. We fasted the day before we went and hoped we would have the grace to say the right things to him. Then we paid his bail so he could leave jail."

A group of young people in Buea, southwest Cameroon, organized a collection of goods and funds to help those internally displaced by the ongoing war. They visited a man who had lost an arm while fleeing from his home. Living with this disability was extremely challenging and had a serious impact upon his life. Regina said, "He told us that our visit gave him hope, joy and confidence. He felt God's love through us." Marita added, "After this experience, I am convinced that nothing is too small if done with love... There is no need for anything else: it is love that moves the world. Try it!"

Edited by Letizia Magri and the Word of Life Team.

iThis month the Word of Life we propose is the same that a group of Christians from different Churches in Germany has chosen to live throughout the year.

iiCf. Ps. 19 [18] 105

iiiCf. Ch. 13

ivChiara Lubich Word of Life, Oct 2006

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