John 16: 33

Take heart: I have overcome the world!

Let's face it: this Word of Life seems really incongruous against the context in which we live and about which we receive increasingly alarming news every day. Indeed, everything seems to lead us to lose heart because we are trapped between the insecurity of situations beyond our control.

It is precisely in such a context that the Gospel of John speaks to us. The apostles are gathered around Jesus during the Last Supper and, in this setting, fraternity and betrayal, self-sacrifice and the darkness of evil alternate dramatically. Jesus delivers a final discourse to prepare them for the ordeal of the Passion, whilst also assuring them that he will return. He warns them that 'in the world' they may be overwhelmed by storms and disappointments, but in him they will always find peace and the fullness of life.

His words are a promise that gives hope.

Take heart: I have overcome the world!

When external circumstances and our own frailties cause fear and suffering, Jesus invites us to entrust ourselves to him, and to recognise the signs of his presence in our lives today so that we may gain a new perspective on reality.

Chiara Lubich writes: *If there is one mysterious reality in our lives, it is pain… Even those close to us who love us are often unable to help us resolve it; yet, sometimes, it is enough for someone simply to share it with us, perhaps in silence.*

This is what Jesus did. He drew near to every man and woman, to the point of sharing every aspect of life with them. He did even more: he took upon himself all our pain and became pain with us, to the point of crying out: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mt. 27: 4). […]

Every physical, moral and spiritual pain reminds me of him; it is his presence, his face. I can say: 'I love you, Jesus forsaken, in this pain. It is you who, by making my pain your own, come to visit me. So I want you, I embrace you!'

If we are careful to love, to respond to his grace, to embrace what God wants from us in the moment that follows, and to live our lives for him, we find that, more often than not, the pain disappears. This is because love calls forth the gifts of the Spirit: joy, light and peace.[1]

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In times of darkness, let us allow him to live within us and overcome evil with good and resist the temptation to harden our hearts. Let us draw close to our brothers and sisters, serving them with love both in small daily acts and in our social commitment to the common good.

Mutual love within the community also bears witness to the Lord's closeness and encourages us. This is the experience of Javier, a young man from the Dominican Republic:

I was visiting my cousin and decided to take a shortcut by climbing over a wall in the courtyard. The wall completely collapsed on top of me, crushing my right leg. At the hospital, I told my parents I couldn't bear the pain. My father said gently to me: 'It's like sharing in Jesus' suffering: try to embrace him.' When I woke up, I realised my leg was gone. At first I cried a lot, but, little by little, I felt an inner calm, trusting that God had a plan for me.

Thanks to the love and support of the young people in our community and others around the world, I now have a temporary prosthesis and in a few months' time I will receive a permanent one. Life at home has gradually returned to normal. I help with the housework, I spend time with my family, and I've even managed to finish school with excellent grades. Everyone – my family, my friends and the hospital staff – have been struck by my calmness and my positive attitude.

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[1] C. Lubich, *Word of Life*, March 2005.