

**“Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord God you have an everlasting rock.” (Is 26:4)**

The Word of Life that we want to live this month is taken from the book of the prophet Isaiah, a wide ranging and rich text also very dear to the Christian tradition. It contains greatly loved writings, such as the announcement of Emmanuel, ‘the God with us’ (Is 7:14 & Mt 1:23), and the figure of the Suffering Servant (Is 52:13-53:12) who forms the background to the accounts of Jesus’ passion and death.

This verse is part of a song of thanksgiving that the prophet puts on the lips of the people of Israel when, having overcome the terrible ordeal of exile, they finally return to Jerusalem. His words bring hope because God’s own presence beside Israel is faithful and unwavering as a rock; God himself will sustain every effort made by the people as they rebuild their civil, political and religious life.

While the city believed to be ‘lofty’ will be razed to the ground (Is 26:5) because it was not built according to God’s plan of love, the one built on the rock will enjoy peace and prosperity.

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How up to the minute this need for stability and peace is! Personally and collectively, we too are going through dark moments in history, which threaten to crush us under the weight of uncertainty and fear for the future.

How can we act in order to overcome the temptation to be brought down by today’s difficulties, the temptation to close in on ourselves, cultivating feelings of suspicion and mistrust towards others?

As Christians, the answer is certainly to ‘rebuild’ with courage, first of all the trusting relationship with God, who in Jesus became our neighbour on the roads of life, even the darkest, narrowest, most winding and steepest ones.

But this faith does not mean being passive. On the contrary, it asks us to be active, creative and responsible protagonists in building a ‘new city’, founded on the commandment of mutual love. A city with open doors, welcoming to all, especially ‘the poor and oppressed’ (Is. 26:6) who have always been the Lord’s favourites.

As we travel along this path, we will enjoy the companionship of the many men and women who hold dear the universal values of solidarity and the dignity of every person, as well as respect for creation, our ‘common home’.

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In the Spanish village of Aljucer, an entire community is committed to building fraternal relationships based upon open and inclusive forms of participation.

They tell us: ‘In the summer of 2008, we set up a cultural association, with the aim of carrying out various initiatives, some started by us, others working alongside other associations in the area. Our goal was to promote spaces for dialogue and international humanitarian projects.

For example, every year since it started, we have promoted a solidarity dinner for the *Fraternity with Africa* project, to finance scholarships for young Africans committed to working in their country for at least five years after their studies. These dinners bring together about two hundred people and are supported by shopkeepers and other groups.

We have also been very happy to work with another association for many years. Together we organise an annual event which is open to people from the worlds of culture, music, painting and literature, as well as representatives engaged in politics, business and medicine. It is an opportunity for all of them to share experiences from their working lives and the deeper reasons for the choices they have made.'

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We are looking forward to Christmas. Let us already begin to prepare for it by welcoming Jesus in his word.

He is also the rock on which to build our human society. As Chiara Lubich wrote: 'Let us incarnate his word in our lives, let us make his word our own. If we put it into practice, we will experience the powerful life it unleashes in us and around us. Let us fall in love with the Gospel to the point of allowing ourselves to be transformed by it and thus enable it to overflow onto others... It will no longer be we who live - Christ will be formed in us. We will be free from ourselves, from our limitations, from all that enslaves us. In addition, we will see the revolution of love explode – the revolution that Jesus who lives in us, will kindle in society around us.'

*Letizia Magri*