

“Live as children of light: for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.” (Eph. 5:8-9)

Paul is writing to the community in Ephesus, a large and imposing city where he had lived while baptizing and evangelizing.

He is probably imprisoned in Rome in about the year 62 AD. He is in distress and yet he writes to these Christians, not so much to solve problems within the community, but to proclaim to them the beauty of God's plan for the developing Church.

He reminds the Ephesians that through the gift of baptism and faith, they have gone from 'being darkness' to 'being light' and he encourages them to behave in a way that reflects this.

For Paul, it is about pursuing a journey, an experience of continuous growth in the knowledge of God and his will of love. Furthermore, it means starting again each day.

Therefore, he wants to encourage them to live always according to the call they have received: to be 'imitators of the Father' as 'beloved children': holy and merciful.

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We, twenty-first century Christians, are also called to 'be light,' but we may feel inadequate and conditioned by our limitations or overwhelmed by external circumstances.

How do we walk with hope, despite the darkness and uncertainties that sometimes seem to assail us?

Paul continues to encourage us: it is the lived Word of God that enlightens us and enables us to 'shine like stars' in this lost humanity.

In a Word of Life commentary of 2005, Chiara Lubich wrote: 'As another Christ, every man and woman can make a contribution ... in all fields of human activity: in science, in art, in politics. ... If we welcome his Word we become more and more attuned to his thoughts, his feelings and his teachings. The Word illuminates our every activity, straightens and corrects every expression of our life... But our 'old self' is always ready to affect our personal private lives and, consequently, we may be drawn to cultivating our own interests and forgetting about the people who pass us by. We may even remain indifferent before the common good and the needs of humanity around us. Let us therefore rekindle the flame of love in our hearts and we will have new eyes to look around us.'

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The light of the Gospel, lived out by individuals and communities, brings hope and strengthens social bonds, even when calamities like Covid cause pain and exacerbate poverty.

Jun, who lives in the Philippines, recounts that at the height of the pandemic, a community he knows was devastated by fire and many families lost everything: 'Even though we are poor, my wife Flor and I really wanted to help. I belong to a motorcycle club, and I told the members about this situation, even though I knew they too were struggling as much as we were. This did not stop my friends from taking action; we collected tins of sardines and packets of noodles, rice and other food which we donated to the victims of the fire.'

'Often, my wife and I feel discouraged at the thought of what the future may hold, but we always remember the phrase in the Gospel that says, "For those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for the sake of the gospel will save it." (Mk. 8:35) Even though we are not rich, we believe that we always have something to share out of love for Jesus in the other person, and it is this love that motivates us to continue to give sincerely and to trust in God's love.'

It is therefore a matter of allowing this light to shine out from the depths of our hearts. The fruits of this way of life - goodness, justice and truth - are pleasing in the eyes of the Lord and bear greater witness to the Gospel than any words we may use.

And let us not forget the support we receive from all those with whom we share this Holy Journey of life. The goodness of others, the mutual forgiveness we experience, and the sharing of material and spiritual goods are a valuable source of help that enables us to be witnesses of hope.

Jesus promised, 'Remember, I am with you all days, until the end of the age.' (Matt. 28:20)

He, the Risen One, the source of our Christian life, is always with us in prayer and mutual love, warming our hearts and enlightening our minds.

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