

October Word of Life

“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.” (Gal 5:18)

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Paul was writing to the Christians of Galatia (a region now located in central Turkey), which he himself had evangelized and that he cared for very much.

Some people in that community thought Christians should follow all the precepts of the Law of Moses in order to be accepted by God and saved.

Paul, on the other hand, affirmed that we are no longer ‘under the Law’ because Jesus himself, who is the Son of God and Saviour of humanity, became the Way to the Father for all people through his death and resurrection. Faith in Jesus opens our hearts to the action of God’s own Spirit, who guides and accompanies us along the paths of life.

Therefore, according to Paul, rather than being about ‘not observing the law’, it is a question of going to the deepest root and most demanding aspect of the Law, allowing oneself to be guided by the Spirit.

In fact, a few lines earlier, Paul said: “The whole Law is summed up in a single commandment: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’” (Gal 5:14)

Christian love for God and neighbour gives us both the freedom and responsibility of God’s children. Following Jesus’ example, we are called to love everyone, to take the initiative in loving others and to love them as ourselves; even those whom we consider are our *enemies*.

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The love that comes from God urges us to act responsibly: in the family, at work and wherever we go. We are called to build relationships that are peaceful, just and lawful.

The law of love lays solid foundations for our life in society, as Maria from Paris explained: “I teach in a school on the outskirts of Paris. It is a multicultural area and many of the students come from disadvantaged families. I organize interdisciplinary projects that enable teamwork and foster a sense of family among my colleagues. This strengthens our credibility in inviting the students to do the same. I learned not to expect results right away, and also when a student does not change. The important thing is to continue to believe in them, accompanying, appreciating and rewarding them. Sometimes I feel I can’t change anything, but there are other times when I see tangible proof that the relationships built are bearing fruit. This happened with a girl who was not behaving in a constructive way in class. I explained to her calmly and firmly that to live in harmony everyone must do their part. Later, she wrote to me: ‘*Sorry about my*

behaviour; it will not happen again. I know you expect concrete action from us and not just words, and I want to commit myself to this. You are someone who gives us students the right values ??and the desire to succeed.”

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Living in love is not simply the fruit of our own efforts. The Spirit who has been given to us gives us the strength to grow in freedom from the slavery of selfishness and to live in love. And we can continually ask for the Holy Spirit.

Chiara Lubich wrote: *"Love is what moves us, suggesting how to respond to situations and to the choices we are called to make. Love teaches us how to discern: this is good and I'll do it; this is bad and I won't do it. Love is what urges us to act in view of other people's good. We are not guided from outside, but by the principle of new life that the Spirit has placed within us. Our heart, mind and strength, and all our abilities, can 'walk according to the Spirit'; because they are united by love and made completely available to God's plan for us and for society. We are free to love."*

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