

July Word of Life

"For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." (Mt.12:50)

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Matthew's Gospel recounts an episode in Jesus' life that can seem unimportant. His mother and other relatives had come to Capernaum where Jesus was staying with the disciples and proclaiming the Father's love to all. They had probably walked a long way to find him, and they wanted to talk to him. They did not go straight into the place where he was but sent a message: "Your mother and brothers are standing outside wanting to speak to you."

The family dimension was undoubtedly very important for the people of Israel: as a whole, the people of Israel was considered to be a "child" of God and heir to his promises. Furthermore, they regarded one another as "brothers and sisters".

But Jesus opened up an unexpected perspective: with a solemn gesture of his hand, he pointed to the disciples and said:

For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

Jesus revealed a new dimension: anyone at all can feel part of this family if that person is committed to knowing and fulfilling the will of the one Father.

Anyone: adult or child, man or woman, in good health or bad, of every culture and social position. Anyone: every person is made in the image of God Love. Indeed, each person is a being created by God with whom he or she can enter into a relationship of knowledge and friendship.

Therefore, anyone can do the will of God, which is love for God and love for one another. And if we love, Jesus recognizes us as his family - his brothers and sisters. This is such a huge opportunity that it catches us by surprise; it frees us from the past, from our fears and from our way of seeing things. In this perspective, even our limitations and our fragility can be "launching pads" that propel us towards fulfilment. There is a qualitative leap in everything.

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In a certain way, we too can be the "mother" of Jesus. Just as Mary was open and available to God from the time of the Annunciation right through till Calvary and then during the birth of the Church, so we too can give birth and rebirth to Jesus in ourselves by living the Gospel, and our mutual love can contribute to generating the presence of Jesus in our communities.

On one occasion, when Focolare founder Chiara Lubich was addressing a group of people eager to live the Word of God, she said: " *'Be a family'. Are there people among you who are suffering spiritual or moral trials? Be understanding of them as a mother would and even more. Enlighten them through your word or example. Don't let them lack the warmth of a family but rather increase it. Are there people among you who are suffering physically? May they be our preferred brothers and sisters. [...] Never put any activity of any kind before the spirit of family with those brothers and sisters with whom you are living. And wherever you go to bring Christ's ideal [...], you will do no better than try to create, with discretion and prudence, but with solid conviction, the spirit of a family. It is a humble spirit, it wishes the best for everyone, it is not proud, it is [...] true charity.*"

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In our everyday lives, we can discover the task that the Father has entrusted to each one of us to build the great human family.

There is a neighbourhood in Homs, in Syria, where more than one hundred and fifty children, mostly Muslims, attend after-school sessions in a building that belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church. Sandra, the director, said: "We are a team of teachers and specialists, and our aim is to create a family atmosphere of welcome and support. Our work is based on dialogue and the promotion of values. Many children are affected by the trauma and suffering they have experienced. Some are apathetic, others aggressive. We want to rebuild their self-confidence and their trust in others. While many families have suffered great loss or been split up because of the war, here they find the will and the hope to start again."

Letizia Magri