

November Word of Life

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.' **(Mt 5:9)**

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The Gospel of Matthew was written by a Christian who came from a Jewish background of that era; therefore it contains many expressions typical of Jewish culture and religious tradition.

In chapter 5, Jesus is presented as the new Moses, who goes up the mountain to announce the essence of the Law of God: the commandment of love. To give solemnity to this teaching, the Gospel tells us that he is seated, like a teacher.

But Jesus is also the first witness to what he announces. This is most evident when he proclaims the Beatitudes, the programme of his whole life. They reveal the radical nature of Christian love, with its fruits of blessings and fullness of joy: true beatitude.

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In the Bible, peace - Shalom in Hebrew - indicates the harmony with which a person lives in relation to God, to themselves and to their surroundings. It is still used as a greeting to wish someone the fullness of life. Peace is primarily a gift from God, but it is also dependent on our response.

Of all the beatitudes, this one strikes us as being the most active. It invites us to move away from an attitude of indifference and, starting with ourselves and those around us, to become builders of harmony, using our intelligence, our hearts and our hands. It calls for commitment to care for others and to heal the personal and social wounds and traumas that are caused by divisive selfishness. This beatitude encourages us to support every effort that tries to achieve this goal.

Jesus, the Son of God, fulfilled his mission when he gave his life on the cross to reunite people with the Father and restore fraternity to the earth. Therefore, the one who is a peacemaker, resembles Jesus and is recognised, like him, as a child of God.

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Following in the footsteps of Jesus, we too can turn every day into a 'day of peace' by ending the small or big 'wars' that are constantly fought around us. To make this dream come true, it is important to build networks of friendship and solidarity, to offer a helping hand but also to accept assistance.

A married couple, Denise and Alessandro wrote: 'When we met, we had a really good relationship. We got married and at the beginning everything was fine, the birth of our children also helped. As time went by however difficulties began to develop. There was no longer any form of dialogue between us, and everything became the subject of constant discussion and argument. We decided to stay together, but we kept falling into the same mistakes, the same old grudges and disagreements. One day, a couple of friends suggested that we take part in a course for couples in difficulty. There we found people who were not only qualified and experienced, but a "family of families" with whom we could share our problems: we were no longer alone! A light was re-lit, but this was just the first step: once we were back home, it was not easy, and every so often we still fall. What helps us is to look after each other, with a commitment to start afresh each day and to stay in touch with these new friends so we can move forward together.'

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As Focolare founder, Chiara Lubich, says: 'The peace of Jesus, asks us to have new hearts and eyes to love and see other people as candidates for universal fraternity.'

And she continues: 'We can ask ourselves "Does that include even those quarrelsome neighbours? Even work colleagues who are blocking the progress of my career? Even members of another political party, or a rival football team? Even people of a different religion or nationality from mine?" Yes, everyone is a brother or sister to me. Peace starts right here, in the relationship I establish with each of my neighbours. Focolare co-founder, Igino Giordani, wrote that "Evil is born from the human heart." He continued "To remove the danger of war, it is necessary to remove the spirit of aggression, exploitation and selfishness from which wars arise and rebuild a conscience." The world will change if we change, ... especially if we highlight what unites us. We will be able to contribute to the creation of a mentality of peace and work together for the good of humanity. ... And in the end love is victorious because it is stronger than anything. Let us try to live like this during this month, to be the leaven of a new culture of peace and justice. We will see a new humanity reborn in us and around us.'

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