

April Word of Life

“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” (Mk.16:15)

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In Mark's gospel, the last words of the Risen Jesus are entrusted to the apostles when he appeared to them after the resurrection.

They were sitting at the table, just as they had been when they were together with Jesus before his passion and death. But this time the small community bears the signs of failure. There are only eleven of them left, instead of the twelve that Jesus had wanted with him. And at the hour of the crucifixion some of those present had denied him and many had fled.

In this last, decisive encounter, the Risen Lord reprimands them for having closed their hearts to the words of those who had borne witness to his resurrection. But at the same time, he confirms his choice of them. Despite their frailty, once again he entrusts them with the proclamation of the Gospel, the Good News which he himself is, with his life and with his words.

After this solemn discourse, the Risen Lord returns to the Father, but at the same time he "remains" with the disciples, confirming all they say with prodigious signs.

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The community sent by Jesus to continue his mission is not therefore a group of people who are perfect; instead they are people called to "be" with him, to experience his presence and his patient and merciful love. Only by virtue of this experience then, are they sent to "proclaim to the whole creation" that God is close at hand.

The success of the mission certainly does not depend on personal abilities but on the presence of the Risen Lord who entrusts himself to his disciples and to the community of believers, in which the Gospel grows to the extent that it is lived and proclaimed.

What we can do as Christians, therefore, is to cry out God's love with our lives and words. We can reach out to others with courage and generosity and offer to everyone, with sensitivity and respect, the treasures of the Risen Lord that open our hearts to hope.

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It is a question of always bearing witness to Jesus and never to ourselves; indeed, we are asked to "deny" ourselves, to "diminish" so that he might grow. We need to make space within ourselves for the power of his Spirit, who urges us towards fraternity:

"...I must follow the Holy Spirit who, every time I meet a brother or sister, makes me ready to 'make myself one' with him or her, to serve them to perfection. And if in some way they are enemies, it is the Spirit who gives me the strength to love them. It is the Spirit who enriches my heart with mercy to know how to forgive and to be able to understand their needs. The Holy Spirit makes me zealous to communicate the most beautiful things in my soul when it is the right time to do so. ... Through my love Jesus' love is revealed and shared with others. ... With and through this love of God in our hearts we can go far, sharing our own discovery with many other people ... until they, deeply touched by his love in us, want to 'make themselves one' with us, in a mutual exchange of help, of ideals, of projects and of affection. Only then can we give the word, and it will be a gift, in this reciprocity of love." (C. Lubich Word of Life June 2003)

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"To the whole creation" is a perspective that makes us aware of our belonging to the great mosaic of Creation, something to which we are particularly sensitive today. Young people are often the leading edge in this new journey of humanity. In the style of the Gospel, they confirm with deeds what they announce with words.

Robert, from New Zealand, shares his experience: "An ongoing activity in our territory supports the restoration of the port of Porirua in the southern part of the Wellington region in New Zealand. This initiative has involved the local authorities, the Maori Catholic community and the local tribe. Our aim is to support this tribe in their desire to lead the restoration of the harbour, ensure that the waters flow clean and allow for shellfish harvesting and customary fishing without fear of pollution. These initiatives have been successful and have created a real community spirit.

The challenge is to avoid this becoming just a passing event and to maintain a long-term programme that brings help and support and really makes a difference on the ground."

Letizia Magri