

April Word of Life

With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all. (Acts 4: 33)

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This word, which comes during the Easter season, invites everyone who has received the message of the Gospel to respond freely and to witness to the event that has marked history: it invites us to witness to Jesus' resurrection!

To fully understand the meaning of this verse taken from the Acts of the Apostles, it is helpful to quote the sentence that precedes it: 'The believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.'^[1]

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The text describes the first Christian community filled with the power of the Spirit and characterized by a sense of fellowship that urges each member to proclaim the good news of the Gospel to everyone, namely that Christ is risen.

These are the same people who before Pentecost were alarmed and frightened by the events that had taken place but had now come out into the open and were ready to bear witness even to the point of martyrdom. This was thanks to the power of the Spirit that swept away fear and apprehension.

They were one heart and one soul, they practised mutual love to the point of sharing their possessions and this way of life was involving an always greater number of people.

Women and men had followed Jesus and heard his words: they had lived alongside him loving and serving the sick and those regarded as the least in society. They had seen Jesus' wondrous deeds with their own eyes and their lives had changed because they had been called to live according to his new law. They had been the first witnesses of God's living presence among men and women.

But what does it mean for followers of Jesus to be witnesses today?

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The most effective way to bear witness to the Risen One is to show that he is alive and lives

among us. 'If we live his Word, [...] keeping love for our neighbour alive in our hearts, if we strive in a special way to always keep mutual love at the basis of our relationships, then the Risen One will live in and among us. He will radiate his light and grace around us, transforming our surroundings and producing incalculable fruits. Through his Spirit, he will guide our steps and actions and create opportunities for us to share his life with people who are in need of him.'^[i]

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Margaret Karram^[ii] writes: "'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation'"^[iv] is the extraordinary task the apostles received 2,000 years ago directly from Jesus and that changed the course of history. Today Jesus addresses the same invitation to us so that we can bring him into the world. He offers us the opportunity to do so using all the creativity, talents and freedom he himself has given us.'^[v]

It is a proclamation 'that does not end with his death, on the contrary! It takes on new strength after the Resurrection and Pentecost, where the disciples became courageous witnesses of the Gospel. And their mandate then comes down to us today. Through me, through each of us, God wants to continue to tell his story of love to those with whom we share long or short stretches of our life.'^[vi]

Edited by Patrizia Mazzola and the Word of Life team.

^[i] Acts 4: 32.

^[ii] C. Lubich, Word of Life, January 1986.

^[iii] President of the Focolare Movement.

^[iv] Mk 16: 15.

^[v] Margaret Karram, *Called and Sent*, 15 September 2023.

^[vi] Ibid.