

September Word of Life

“Welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.” (James 1:21)

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The Word of Life for this month comes from a text attributed to St James, who was a prominent figure in the church in Jerusalem. He exhorted Christians saying there should be coherence between what they believed and what they did.

The first paragraph of the letter highlights an essential condition that makes this possible: to free ourselves from all wickedness in order to welcome God's Word and be guided by it on the journey towards the fulfilment of our Christian vocation.

The Word of God has a power of its own, which is creative and produces fruits of goodness in each person and in the community. It builds relationships founded on love between each of us and God and similarly among people.

James says this Word has already been "planted" in us.

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How can this be? It is surely because, right from the start, God stated clearly that humankind was created in his 'image'. In fact, every human being is a 'you' in relation to God. Every person is called into existence to share in God's life of love and fellowship.

For Christians, however, the sacrament of baptism incorporates us into Christ, the Word of God who entered into human history.

God has therefore sown the seed of his Word in every person. This Word calls them to do what is good, to justice, self-giving and fellowship. When the Word is welcomed and cultivated in our own 'soil', it produces life and fruit.

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One place where God clearly speaks to us is the Bible, and for Christians the Gospels are its highest point. We can welcome God's Word by reading Scripture with love, and we see its fruits when we put it into practice.

We can also listen to God in the depths of our hearts, where we often experience an influx of many 'voices' and 'words'. These might be slogans, or about choices we might make, or people to admire, as well as worries or fears. How can we recognize God's Word and leave

room for it to live in us?

We need to disarm our heart and 'surrender' to God's call, so as to listen freely and courageously to his voice, which is usually gentle and quiet.

God's voice asks us to go out of ourselves and venture onto the path of encounter and dialogue with him and with others. It also calls on us to work so that human co-existence can be more harmonious, in which we all recognize one another more and more as brothers and sisters.

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In fact, the Word of God can transform our daily life into the story of our liberation from the darkness of personal and social evil. However, we need to accept the Word personally and consciously, even if it is an on-going process and we are imperfect and fragile.

Our thoughts and feelings will become more like those of Jesus himself. Our faith and hope in God's love will grow stronger, and we will notice other people's needs and help them.

Chiara Lubich explained this in 1992: “We saw a profound unity between Jesus' love for the Father and his love for his brothers and sisters. There was utter coherence between his words and his life, which fascinated and attracted everyone. We too should be like him, accepting his words with childlike simplicity and putting them into practice. His words shine out in their purity, strength and completeness. By living them, we become the kind of disciples he wants us to be, disciples who are equal to their teacher, other Jesuses spread throughout the world. What greater and more beautiful adventure could there be?”

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