
Word of Life

November 2023

**You are all children of light and children of the day;
we do not belong to the night, nor to darkness**

(1 Thess 5:5).

Light has always symbolized life. Every day we await the dawn as the harbinger of a new beginning.

The theme of light has often featured in the histories of peoples and in ancient religions.

Jewish tradition celebrates Hannukah, the festival of lights, which commemorates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem and the liberation from pagan cults.

Some Muslims light candles on the day of the prophet's birth, known as Mawlid in Arabic or Mevlid Kandili in Turkish.

Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, is also celebrated in other Indian religions and symbolizes the victory of good over evil.

For Christians, Jesus Christ is the light that illuminates the darkness of the world.

Light, therefore, is charged with strong symbolism and represents the presence of the divine and is a gift for humanity and the earth.

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But what are the characteristics of the children of the day? One of them is "not belonging to the night, nor to darkness." The renunciation of lethargy and apathy lies in the decision to remain in a state of wakefulness. It means choosing to love and to live each moment fully.

In this letter, the apostle's pressing invitation to the Thessalonian community is to keep watch together, renouncing all kinds of stupor and indifference. During a time when humanity is particularly in need of light, as Paul writes (cf. 1 Thess 5:8) those who "do not belong to the night" have the task of bringing greater clarity to all human relationships by a process of continuous self-giving that, through faith, love and hope, makes visible the presence of the Risen One.

Furthermore, we need to cultivate a closer and more sincere relationship with God by searching our hearts deeply and finding moments of dialogue in prayer, and by living out his word that makes this light shine out.

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Sometimes we can become accustomed to living in the darkness of our hearts and be content with the many false lights around us and the world's various promises of happiness. However, God always calls us to allow his light to shine within and to look carefully at people and all that is happening so we can recognize signs of radiance.

Effort is needed to continually choose to begin afresh and turn from darkness to light. Chiara Lubich wrote, "The Christian cannot escape from the world and hide or consider religion to be a private affair. He or she lives in the world because each person has a responsibility, a mission, to be the light that illuminates. You, too, have this task, and if you do not do this, your ineffectiveness is like salt that has lost its flavor or light that has become shadow." ¹ [...] "The task of all Christians is, therefore, to let this light shine through them and be the 'sign' of this presence of God among all people." ²

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God is light and can be found by those who seek him with a sincere heart. No matter what happens, we will never be separated from his love because we are his children. If we are sure of this, we will not be surprised or crushed by upsetting events.

This year's earthquake in Turkey and Syria, which claimed more than 50,000 victims, turned the lives of millions of people upside down. Those who survived the catastrophe found that entire communities there and in other countries have been points of light that worked to bring immediate aid and provide relief to those who have lost loved ones, homes ... everything.

Darkness can never overwhelm those who choose to live in the light and to generate light. For us Christians, this means a life with Christ in our midst, a presence that makes it possible to catch a glimpse of life that restores hope and allows us to continue to dwell in God's love.

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Edited by Patrizia Mazzola and the Word of Life team.

Each month the Focolare chooses a Scripture passage as a guide and inspiration for daily living. The commentary, which was originally written by founder Chiara Lubich (1920–2008), is written by an international commission drawing inspiration from the Spirituality of Unity and, translated into 96 different languages, reaches several million people worldwide.

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¹ Cf Matt. 5:13-16

² C. Lubich, Word of Life Aug. '79