

To follow Jesus

This year, throughout the whole Movement, we are going into depth with one of the cornerstones of our spirituality, which is the “Word of God.” It would be a good idea then, at least this one time, to stop for a moment and examine the impact that the Word has had on our life. You know that a constant concern of ours is that with the passing of time the Word (or the spiritual thought of the conference call that summarizes it, or reminds us of it) may lose the revolutionary strength it had at the beginning of the Movement, and that actually gave rise to the Focolare itself. Don’t we say that the Movement began because we were living the Word, putting the Word into practice, keeping the Word in our hearts and in our lives?

In fact, the Focolare did not exist beforehand. But once the Gospel was put into practice, one sentence after another, a community was formed of persons who got to know one another for the first time and began to love one another. Individuals who had lived apart began to form a small “people” – it was the beginning of the Focolare Movement.

Now we want to ask ourselves: “Does the Word have the same impact on our lives today?”

If we look at the Work of Mary in general, we can answer in the affirmative. In fact, at the periphery of the Movement, or we might say where the Focolare is on the front lines, there are numerous Word of Life groups that have the sole purpose of learning how to put the Word into practice. We visit these groups and share with them other aspects of our spirituality and gradually bring them into contact with the entire life of the Work of Mary. Therefore, we can see the life of the Word in these groups is really the starting point for forming the Movement. This certainly gives us joy and a sense of gratitude to God.

But for those of us who are already part of the Focolare, does the Word have this dynamic, revolutionary and transforming power? We can answer in the affirmative if we experience the effects it brings, those listed in the talk we gave on the Word.

As we know, living the Word should change all our relationships: our relationship with God and with our neighbors. Through the Word we should discover the presence of the Father in our communities, who intervenes with his Providence and fulfills his evangelical promises to the letter, since we are living his Word to the letter.

So then, looking at the Movement as it is now, we can see that at least some of these effects are experienced. Doesn’t the Word (or, I repeat, the conference call which

is linked to the Word) resolve all our personal problems? Doesn't the Word urge us to continually make the risen Lord live again in us through our repeated efforts to embrace Jesus forsaken?

And since it gives us the strength to stand firm, doesn't it help us to love others, to be outside of ourselves, to be launched into serving our neighbors and practicing the New Commandment? Doesn't all this bring about renewed relationships with our neighbors? Doesn't this keep the Focolare alive in all its branches and cause it to expand?

With regard to God's Providence, isn't this a daily reality in many parts of the "Ideal world,"¹ just as it was at the very beginning of the Focolare?

Yes, in our experience we have seen that the Word is still achieving its purpose. Furthermore, it appears to me that many of us have taken hold of it as the anchor that will save us. In general, the Word is the basis of our lives, of all our activity. Therefore, we can be content. The Holy Spirit has not abandoned us, but has helped us to remain faithful to him, and to put the admonition, "one thing only is required,"² in its proper place.

Of course, if we consider case by case, we can see that we can always do more and better, but we can't deny that God has helped us, that the Movement is alive, and that the revolution brought about by the Word continues.

Therefore, since this is true, let's take heart and move further ahead.

This month's Word of Life tells us: "My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me."³ With these words, Jesus wanted to tell us that those who, through the grace of God, are open to the Word and accept it, are always more instinctively in tune with his thoughts, his sentiments and his teachings. He knows who they are and loves them, and as a consequence they follow him as his disciples.

During these next two weeks, let's try to "follow Jesus." His voice speaks to our hearts. At times, he will tell us to revive reciprocal love and at other times, to embrace the cross. He will suggest to us to be perfect, or to improve, or to begin again. . . . Whatever he tells us, let's follow him.

"To follow Jesus" is the motto we resolve to live.

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1 Wherever there are members or adherents of the Focolare throughout the world.

2 Lk. 10:42.

3 Jn 10:27.