

WORD OF LIFE

by Chiara Lubich

March 1982

“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.” (Jn 12:26)

You will remember that when Jesus spoke of his death, he used a comparison that is now well known: just as the grain of wheat produces abundant fruit only if it dies¹, so it will be with him. Actually he went on to say that those who love their life will lose it, while those who lose it will keep it for eternal life.² It is at this point that he adds:

“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.”

With these words, Jesus invites those who want to serve him to follow him along the same path. *“Whoever...”* Jesus says.

To whom was Jesus speaking? Obviously not to a particular category of persons, but to anyone, to everyone. His words are directed to every believer, and therefore to you and me as well. His destiny, which was to pass through death in order to reach his glory, is also the destiny of his disciples – your destiny and mine. The way of Jesus is the path all people must follow in order to reach their full potential and fulfil their vocation.

“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.”

“My servant.” This word “servant,” used by Jesus, indicates that each Christian is meant to be Christ’s messenger in the world, his collaborator, his minister. And to be a true “servant” of Christ, a Christian must set out to follow the same path as Jesus did, which is the way of love. This may mean that one day we would even be asked to give our life out of love for our neighbor, as Jesus did. Certainly, it will mean that every day we will be asked to die to ourselves. In fact, it is not possible to really love others without self-denial and sacrifice.

1 Jn 12:24.

2 Jn 12:25.

This is the way the first Christians practiced loving. It was their way of “dying and rising”, and because of this way of loving, they were recognized as servants of Jesus, as his disciples. Certainly, you are familiar with his words: *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*³

“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.”

If we follow Jesus, our destination will be the very same as his. We will gain heaven and the honor of the Father, which means we will share in the glory that Jesus receives from him. This promise is similar to the one Jesus made in his farewell words to his apostles. He told them he was going to prepare a place for them, and would return to take them to be with him.

“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.”

How, then, should we live this Word of Life?

Jesus’ promises are so great, the future is so splendid and immense that we shouldn’t hesitate even a moment before setting out on the path indicated by him. Let’s approach each person we meet during the day with the disposition to being ready to die for him or her. If this is our attitude, every sacrifice will then be spontaneous, and dying to ourselves and our selfishness will be a natural consequence. Then we will be Jesus’ servants, his disciples, and we attain the goal he promised us: heaven and an eternity of communion with him.

Furthermore, if more than one of us acts in this way, love will be mutual and will have an extraordinary effect on others. Christ will not wait for the next life to give us the gift of his company. He will be in our midst even now, because he said: *“Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”*⁴ And already here on earth, our joy will be complete. The stakes are too high for us to let this opportunity pass us by. And so let’s launch into it with courage!

3 Jn 13:35.

4 Mt 18:20.