

(English translation)

Rocca di Papa, 26 January 1979

Word of Life

“By your perseverance you will secure your lives” (Luke 21:19).

Do you know who the Saints are?

They are fulfilled Christians. Christians who were able to save their own souls. We are sure about it because the Church does not make mistakes in such matters.

I might be able to give you examples of living persons who will save their souls, but which of them can you be sure will persevere in this condition until the very end?

Saints are those who have managed.

Why?

Because saints have been able to cultivate a power, a virtue: perseverance.

“By your perseverance you will secure your lives”

“Perseverance.” This is a translation of a Greek word that is pregnant with implications, including patience, constancy, resistance, trust.

Perseverance is necessary and indispensable when we suffer, when we are tempted, when we are inclined to be discouraged, or when we are drawn to the seductions of the world, and it is truly necessary when we suffer persecution.

I think that you too have found yourself in at least one of these situations and have experienced that, without perseverance, you would have given in. Perhaps at times you did give in. Maybe now, at this very moment, you find yourself immersed in one of these painful situations.

What will you do? What should you do? Start again, and... persevere. Otherwise the name “Christian” does not suit you.

You know that whoever wants to follow Christ must take up his cross each day, must love suffering, at least with his will. The Christian vocation is a call to perseverance.

The apostle Paul demonstrated his perseverance before the Christian community as a sign of Christian authenticity. And he did not hesitate to put it on the same level as miracles.

If you love the cross and persevere to the very end, you will follow Christ, who is in Heaven, and therefore be saved.

"By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

It is possible to distinguish two categories of people: those who hear the invitation to be true Christians, but the invitation lands in their souls like a seed on rocky ground. There is a burst of fleeting enthusiasm, but afterward nothing remains. Then there are those who welcome the invitation, just as good soil receives the seed. And Christian life sprouts, grows, overcomes difficulties, and resists storms.

Christians have perseverance, and... “by your perseverance you will secure your lives.”

Naturally, if you want to persevere, it is not enough to rely only on your own strength. You need God’s help. Paul calls God “the God of perseverance” (Rm 15:5).

You must ask him for it, and he will give it to you. If you are a Christian, you will never be content with merely being baptized or doing some acts of worship or charity every now and then. You must grow as a Christian, and every growth in spiritual life can only come about in the midst of trials, sufferings, obstacles, and battles.

Those who really know how to persevere are those who love. Love is never hindered by obstacles. It does not count difficulties or sacrifices. And perseverance is love that has been put to the test.

Mary is the model of the persevering person. At a very early age she chose God exclusively as her All and she remained faithful to Him all her life.

Tradition tells us that when she was a young girl she consecrated herself to Him as a virgin, but she was not afraid to become a mother when God wanted it. She became the mother of Christ while remaining a virgin. She persevered in her vocation even when Joseph had his doubts, when she had to give birth to her Son in a stable, when she escaped with Him to Egypt, when she lost Him for three days while He was at the temple. She persevered in her love for God and His will, keeping His mystery hidden for 30 years, and letting Jesus accomplish His mission for three years. And such was her constancy in adhering to the plan of God for her, that she stood at the foot of the cross in an ocean of sorrow, in front of her crucified Son. Then after the Ascension, she was there at the heart of the new-born Church enduring in her love for God up to the point of being assumed into Heaven when her hour had come.

Mary is the woman of perseverance.

Ask God to enkindle love for him in your heart, and then perseverance, in all the difficulties of life, will come to you as a consequence, and with it the salvation of your soul.

“By your perseverance you will secure your lives.”

And there is more. Perseverance is contagious. The person who perseveres encourages others to do the same....

I spoke to you about the saints, about Mary. If you have observed, they are persons who had drawn behind them crowds to bring them to God, and they continue to cast an attraction through the centuries with the example of their perseverance, with the light that bursts forth from the love that made them persevere.

Let us set our sights high. We have only one life, and it is brief at that. Let us clench our teeth and stand firm from day to day; let us face one difficulty after another in order to follow Christ... and our lives will be secure.

Chiara Lubich