

(English translation)

Rocca di Papa, 25 May 1981

Word of Life

**“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt 10:39).**

Reading these words of Jesus, two kinds of existence come into relief: the earthly life that is built in this world, and the supernatural life that is given by God through Jesus, a life that does not end with death and that no one can take away from us.

We can, therefore, choose between two attitudes. One is to be attached to our earthly life, considering it as our only good. This attitude leads to thinking only of ourselves, only of our own affairs, only of our dear ones, thereby sealing ourselves up within a shell and affirming only our ego. This road inevitably ends up in death. The other choice, instead, is to believe that God has given us a much more profound and authentic existence. This gives us the courage to live in a manner that merits this gift to the point of "losing" our earthly life for that other life.

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When Jesus said these words he was thinking of martyrdom. Like all Christians, we should be ready to follow the Master and to remain faithful to the Gospel, to lose our life, even to die a violent death. Then, we will obtain the true life. Jesus was the first one who "lost his life," and he regained it glorified. He warned us, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Mt 10:28).

Today he tells us:

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If we read the Gospel carefully, we will see that Jesus goes back to this thought six times. This shows how important it is and how much Jesus values it.

But for Jesus, the exhortation to lose one's life is not only an invitation to martyrdom. It is a fundamental law of Christian life.

We must be ready to reject the temptation to set up our own selves as the ideal of our lives; we have to give up our selfishness. If we want to be authentic Christians, we must put Christ at the centre of our lives. What does Christ want from us? Love for others. If this becomes our lifestyle, we will have "lost" our own lives, and found eternal life.

And not living for oneself certainly does not mean, as some people may think, to be laid back and passive. As a theologian said: "It's not a matter of despising this life or of not being interested in it, but rather it's a matter of committing one's life to the way of love." Indeed, Christians need to be firmly committed and fully responsible.

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Even in this life, it is possible to experience that by giving of ourselves, by putting love into every action, "life" grows within us. When we spend our day at the service of others, when we transform our daily work (which is perhaps monotonous and tedious) into a gesture of love, we experience the joy of greater fulfilment.

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By following Jesus' commandments, which all focus on love, we will find after this brief life eternal life as well.

Let us remember what Jesus will say and do on the day of judgment. To those on his right (and I hope you will be on this side): "Come, you that are blessed by my Father... for I was hungry and you gave me food... I was... a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me" (Mt 25:34-36).

To let us participate in the life that does not pass away, Jesus will look at just one thing: if we loved our neighbours. He will consider as done to himself whatever we did to them.

How then should we live this Word of Life? How should we "lose" our life even now in order to find it?

By preparing ourselves for that great and decisive final examination that we were born for.

Let's look around us and fill our day with acts of love. Christ presents himself to us in our children, in our wife, in the people we work with and relax with, and in our politicians. Let's do good to everyone. And let's not forget those we come to know about every day through the newspapers, friends or through the media. Let's do something for everyone, according to our means. And when we have exhausted our means, we can still pray for our neighbours, whether they are living or dead. Loving is what counts.

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