

(English translation)

5 December 1985

## To Grow and Be Overabundant<sup>1</sup>

Dearest all,

The Word of Life for this month is truly fabulous, and it will be helpful for many of us.

In fact, we must admit that even with all our good will, the journey to sanctity is not an easy one.

Moreover, it would be outside the normality of things if from time to time we were not faced with a difficult situation, a temptation, or the impression of no longer being able to make it. It happens to everyone, and we shouldn't be taken by surprise. The very lives of the saints are marked by trials that occur one after the other.

For us who for the most part live in the midst of the world, there is even more reason for this to be true.

The world - as we know - even in its undeniable beauties which merit all of our attention and appreciation (for its progress, its various cultures, its new discoveries, its natural richness, humankind's many inventions) is still the number one danger for a Christian. It is the environment in which Satan reigns with all his deceptions, his seductions, attractions and perverse offers. And Christians who live in this environment are called day by day to go against the current, to keep their distances, and to defend themselves. And they do not always succeed in doing so. Interior struggles are unleashed, and why not? Concrete persecutions arrive from those who do not think the same way as we do. We could feel driven to abandon our Holy Journey, to set it aside and to coast into the road of mediocrity.

But we cannot do it. We cannot betray Jesus who has filled our hearts with such joy in exchange for even the little we have done in answering His call. Even if moments come in which we would want to cry "enough," causing us to want to give up our struggle, we feel we cannot surrender. What must we hold onto to keep us from falling away? What is the medicine or the remedy which we can rely on in these kinds of moments which all of us must pass through?

The remedy lies in the Word of Life for this month. It is truly a fabulous and extraordinary one. I have tried to put it into practice and it appears to me—the saints would say—as a *sanatotum* (cure-all), which restores health to everything. St. Paul wrote this to the Thessalonians, a young community whose strength was threatened by persecution. He did not find a better cure than making this suggestion: to grow and be overabundant in love for one another and for everyone.

Reciprocal love, therefore, and love for all.

The Apostle Paul knew that if there was reciprocal love, Jesus would be present among those Christians who were tempted to surrender; and if they were faithful in loving the others, the Lord would have dwelled in their hearts. Therefore he affirms, and this is our Word of Life for the month, "May the Lord make you grow and be overabundant in your love for one another and for everyone (1 Th 3:12)

"To grow and be overabundant."

This is the cure also for those of us who are undergoing difficult moments.

This is a Word of Life for all of us who in various parts of the day face the possibility of falling out of tune.

Try it. Try to grow and be overabundant in love. Before writing this conference call, I too have tried to do this, and I found myself in such peace. I had the impression that this is a Word of Life that enters the deepest region of our hearts. It is our very charism. To encourage each other to do so would be to touch on the very essence of our life.

---

<sup>1</sup> Taken from *On the Holy Journey*, New City Press, New York 1988, pp. 105-107.

Try in the meantime to grow in reciprocal love with those who share our Ideal, and you will realize how sweet and pleasant is its application. At times it will mean to say an extra word, give an extra smile, to be a bit more attentive, to make a gift which otherwise we would not have done.

Try to concentrate your lives solely on this growing and being overabundant, and you will experience new life flowing within your souls, while fears, doubts, sensations of feeling blocked and restrained, temptations, or whatever they are, will begin to vanish.

This Word of Life works the miracle of our continual rebirth: through a faith that is more alive, a hope that is more secure and a charity that is more ardent, the Risen Lord will shine forth always more resplendently within us. In this there is life.

Try it and you will experience that you are on course. The mortifications and penances that we must practice in order to love our ideal, Jesus Forsaken, are implicit in this growing and being overabundant, and therefore they are typically our own.

But let's not limit ourselves to loving only those who share our ideal. Let's love everyone. This is what the Gospel asks of us.

Let's grow and be overabundant in love also towards every neighbor, and in a few minutes, I assure you, also those who feel defeated will acquire new trust and will experience once again to be journeying towards our goal with the same enthusiasm of the journey's start.

Then there is the "big gift" that we want to prepare for Christmas. What better Word of Life could be offered to us?

With the heart of St. Paul I would like to wish all of you and myself that our community which is spread throughout the world may grow and be overabundant in charity to the extent of truly giving joy to Jesus in Heaven, causing Him to say: This is truly the most beautiful Christmas since the day I was born on earth.

Therefore, so that this may become true, let's remember: to grow and to be overabundant in love.

Chiara Lubich