

(English translation)

Rome, April 25, 1988¹

Word of life

Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. (1 Jn. 3:18)

John the Evangelist wrote these words. He was putting his communities on guard against certain people whose words spoke highly of faith in Jesus, but who did not follow faith through with practice. Indeed, they considered practice to be useless and superfluous, as if Jesus had already done everything. Their faith was empty and sterile because it took away from the work of Jesus the indispensable contribution he asks from each of us.

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Love in action. True faith, says John, is faith that gives proof of itself by loving as Jesus loved and taught us to do. Now, the first characteristic of this kind of love is its concreteness. Jesus did not love us merely by giving wonderful talks. Rather, he was in our midst doing good, healing all, being fully available to those who came to him, beginning with the weakest, the poorest, the most marginalized, and giving up his life for us.

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We are to love, John says, not only in action but also in truth. Christian love, at the same time as trying to be translated into actual deeds, is deeply concerned with being inspired by the truth of love that we find in Jesus; it is deeply concerned with doing deeds that conform to Jesus' wishes and teachings. We must love, that is, in the way and with the measure Jesus shows us.

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How are we to live the Word of Life this month? Its message is almost too clear. It is a reminder of that genuine Christianity upon which Jesus insisted so much. But isn't this also what the world is longing for? Isn't it perhaps true that the world today wants to see witnesses of the love of Jesus?

Let's, therefore, love in action and not only in word, beginning with the humble services that are asked of us each day by those around us.

And let's love in truth. Jesus always acted according to the Father's will. In the same way, we should act always according to Jesus' words. He wants us to recognize him in each neighbour. In fact, whatever we do to any person he considers as done to himself. He also wants us to love others as ourselves, and he wants us to love one another ready to give up our lives one for the other.

Let's love like this, then, so that we too may be instruments of Jesus for the salvation of the world.

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