

(English translation)

Rome, January 25, 1992<sup>1</sup>

## Word of Life

**‘If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them’ (Lk. 6:32).**

This month’s Word of Life is taken from Luke’s gospel. It is part of a large section of Jesus’ sayings that corresponds to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s Gospel. As we know, in this section Jesus describes the requirements of the kingdom of God and the characteristics of those who belong to it. The source and goal of these requirements is imitating our heavenly Father.

In this verse Jesus calls his disciples to imitate God the Father in loving. If we want to be his children, we must love our neighbours in the way he does.

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The first and most significant characteristic of God the Father’s love is that it is absolutely free. It is totally opposite to the world’s love. The world’s love is based on getting something back and feelings of attraction (we love people who love us and people we like). The Father’s love is completely selfless. He gives himself to the people he has made however they react. It is a love whose nature is to take the initiative, giving all that it has. Consequently, it is a love that builds and transforms. Our heavenly Father does not love us because we are good or spiritually beautiful and so deserve his attention and kindness. On the contrary, by loving us, he himself creates in us the goodness and spiritual beauty of grace, making us his friends and his children.

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Another characteristic of the love of God the Father is its universality. God loves everyone without distinction. The measure of his love is to have no limit or measure.

Besides, his love couldn’t be free and creative if it weren’t completely poured out wherever there is a need or a void to fill.

This is why our heavenly Father also loves those children who are ungrateful, far from him or rebellious. Indeed, he feels particularly drawn to them.

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How shall we live the Word of Life this month?

We should behave as true children of our heavenly Father, imitating his love, above all in those characteristics we have emphasized here: its being freely given and universal. Like this we’ll try to be the first to love, with a love that is generous, in solidarity with the other, open to all, aware particularly of the voids we find around us. We’ll try to love without looking for results. We’ll make an effort to be the

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<sup>1</sup> First published February 1992.

instruments of the open-handedness of God, sharing with others the gifts of nature and grace we have received from him.

If we let ourselves be guided by this word of Jesus, we will have new eyes and a new heart for every neighbour coming across our path, every time this chance is offered by our daily life. And wherever we are (home, school, work, hospital and so on) we will feel urged to be distributors of this love which belongs to God and which Jesus brought to earth, the only love that can transform the world.

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