

(Transcription)

October 2002

Word of Life

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and all your mind.
(Mt 22:37)

The debate was common between schools of rabbis at the time of Jesus. The Scriptures have many commandments: which is the first? Jesus was considered a teacher and he did not duck the question when asked: 'Which commandment in the law is the greatest?' He gives an original answer, uniting love of God with love of neighbour. His disciples can never separate these two loves, as the leaves of a tree cannot be separated from its roots. The more they love God, the more intensely they love their brothers and sisters; the more they love their brothers and sisters, the more they deepen their love for God.

Jesus knows, more than anyone, the true nature of the God we must love. And so he knows just how God is to be loved: God is his Father and our Father, his God and our God (see Jn 20:27). He is a God who loves each human being personally; he loves you, he loves me; he is *my* God, he is *your* God ('You shall love the Lord *your* God').

And we can love him because he first loved us. The love we are commanded to have, therefore, is a response to Love. We can turn to him with the same confidence and trust that Jesus had when he called him Abba, Father. We too, like Jesus, can speak with him often, telling him all our needs, our resolutions, our plans, redeclaring our exclusive love for him. We too wish to be eager for the moment when we can come into deep contact with him through prayer, which is conversation, communion, an intense friendship. In those moments we can let our love really express itself, adoring him beyond creation, glorifying his presence everywhere in the whole of the universe, praising him in the depths of our hearts or living in tabernacles, thinking of him with us wherever we are, in our room, at work, in the office, while we meet with others...

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Jesus teaches us also another way to love the Lord God. For Jesus, to love meant doing the will of the Father, offering mind, heart, energies, and life itself: Jesus gave himself completely to the plan the Father had for him. The gospel shows us Jesus always and totally turned towards the Father (see Jn 1:18), always in the Father, always intent on saying only what he had heard from the Father, on doing only what the Father had told him to do. He asks the same of us too. To love means doing the will of the Beloved, without half measures, with all our being: 'with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' Love is not only a feeling. So Jesus demands of those who love only with words: 'Why do you call me "Lord, Lord", and do not do what I tell you?' (Lk 6:46).

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How then can we live this command of Jesus? Certainly by keeping up a relationship with God as his children and his friends, but above all by doing what he wants. Our attitude to God, like that of Jesus, is to be always turned towards the Father, listening to him, in obedience, so as to carry out his work, that alone and nothing else.

This asks us to be thoroughly drastic, because it is not possible to give God less than everything: *all* our heart, *all* our soul, *all* our mind. And this means to do well and completely the action that he is asking of us.

To live his will and be one with it, will often require burning our own, sacrificing all that we have in our heart or mind that does not concern the present. It can be an idea, a feeling, a thought, a desire, a memory, a thing, a person...

And so we will do with our whole selves whatever is asked of us in each present moment. Speaking, telephoning, listening, helping, studying, praying, eating, sleeping, living his will without our thoughts wandering: doing things in a complete, clear-cut, perfect way, with all our heart, soul and mind; having love as the one motive for our every action, so that we can say in every moment of the day: 'Yes, my God, in this moment, in this action I have loved you with all my heart, with the whole of myself.' Only in this way can we say that we love God, that we give love in return for his being Love for us.

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To live this Word of Life it will be useful, from time to time, to examine ourselves to see whether God is truly in the first place within us.

So then, to conclude, what must we do this month? Choose God once more as our only ideal, as the all of our life, putting him back in the first place, living his will with perfection in the present moment. We must be able to say to him sincerely: 'My God and my all,' 'I love You,' 'I am all yours,' 'You're God, you're my God, our God of infinite love!'

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