

## WORD OF LIFE

by Chiara Lubich

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*“Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” (Mk 6:31)*

We admire a tree’s leaves and flowers and look forward to its fruits, but there are also the roots from which the tree draws life. It is the same for each one of us. We are called to give, to love, to serve, to create fraternal relationships, to work to build a more just world. But we need roots, which means the inner life of union with God, our own personal relationship of love with him, which motivates and nourishes the life of fraternal communion and our commitment to society.

It is equally true that love for others nourishes, in turn, our love for God and makes it more dynamic and real, just as it is true that light and warmth, received through the leaves, reinforces the tree’s roots. Love for God and love for neighbor are expressions of the same love. Interior life and exterior life are rooted in each other.

The Word of Life chosen for this month invites us to cultivate our inner life with special care, especially through meditation and moments of solitude and silence, so as to go into depth in our personal relationship with God. Jesus repeats to us what he said one day to his disciples, seeing that they were tired after having generously given of themselves to others:

*“Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.”*

From time to time Jesus, too, withdrew from his many activities. There were the sick to heal, the crowds to instruct and feed, sinners to convert, poor people to help and console, disciples to guide... And yet, even though everyone sought him out, he knew how to withdraw from the populated areas and go to “*a deserted place*” to be alone with his Father.<sup>1</sup> It was like going home. In his personal and silent conversation with his Father, he found the words that he would then say to his people;<sup>2</sup> he understood his own mission better; he regained the strength to face a new day. He wants us to do the same.

*“Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.”*

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1 See Mk 1:35; Lk 5:16.

2 See Jn 8:26.

It's not easy to stop what we are doing. Sometimes we are caught up by a whirl of work and activities, as if we were a cog in a machine that's out of control. Society often dictates a frenetic pace of life. We always have to produce more, advance in our career, be the best... It's not easy to achieve any degree of solitude and silence inside and outside of ourselves. Yet these are the very conditions needed to hear the voice of God, to see how our lives measure up to his Word, to cultivate and deepen our relationship of love with him. Without this inner energy, we run the risk of going around in circles and our busy life will produce little fruit.

This is why we need to have some period, no matter how brief, when we rest physically and mentally, also to avoid too much stress in our life. It might seem to us that we are wasting time, and yet here too we have to trust Jesus' invitation:

*“Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.”*

Jesus took the disciples away with him by themselves, so that they could be with him and find rest with him: *“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest (...) and you will find rest for your souls.”*<sup>3</sup> The best rest is to take some time to “stay” with Jesus, to live in his grace, in his love, and allow ourselves to be formed by his words.

In particular, before we pray, which is a special time for “being with Jesus,” it is good to detach ourselves from everything, rest a little, gather our thoughts and enter into the secrecy and silence of our inner room.<sup>4</sup> We shouldn't measure the amount of time we spend in prayer. The more time we lose in prayer the more we gain. It is like diving into union with God and we will find peace. In this way, we will reach an uninterrupted “conversation” with him, and be in a continuous state of contemplation, beyond the time set aside for prayer. This has been my experience for many years now.

Once I wrote this prayer:

“Lord!

In my heart I hold you, the treasure that must shape my every move.

Follow me, watch over me.

Let yours be my loving - rejoicing and suffering.

May no one catch even a sigh.

Hidden in your tabernacle I live, I work for everyone.

May the touch of my hand be yours,

yours alone the tone of my voice.”

Even when it is not possible for us to distance ourselves physically from the noise and turbulence of the world that surrounds us, we can go into the depths of our hearts, in

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3 Mt 11:28-29.

4 Mt 6:6.

search of God, and he is always there. Sometimes it is enough to say, "For you, Jesus," before every activity or before a meeting. This too is a way to withdraw a little, to step back from everything going on around us and give a divine purpose and character to whatever we are doing. And we should also offer him every suffering, whether it be big or small.

Our communion with him will become more perfect. Our physical health will also benefit. We will return to our activities refreshed and with greater energy to continue loving everyone.