

WORD OF LIFE

by Chiara Lubich

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“Those who do what is true come to the light.” (Jn 3:21)

“Do” what is true? Surely the truth is learned, they say, or spoken... But according to Jesus, “truth” is something we “do.” Jesus always surprises us!

Nicodemus, who was a rabbi and a member of the Sanhedrin, was also surprised. He had gone to see Jesus to ask how to enter the kingdom of God. He was told that he would have to be reborn, which meant accepting the new life Jesus had come to bring, allowing himself to be transformed inwardly, to the point of becoming a child of God, and in this way to enter into his world. Salvation, more than a human achievement, is a gift from on high. Nicodemus, having gone to see Jesus by night, in darkness, left full of light.

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This Word of Life is an invitation to act in conformity with the truth, in line with the Gospel. It asks us to be people who put the Word of God into practice, and not just listen to it.¹ Hilary, who was the bishop of Poitiers and a father of the Church, once said: *“There is nothing about the Word of God that cannot be lived out; everything that is said in it needs to be put into practice. The Words of God are decrees.”*²

Faith and moral behavior are very closely linked. It is clear from the intense conversation with Nicodemus that in Jesus light, life and dynamic love all coincide. It has to be the same for those who accept him and, in him, become sons and daughters of God. Clement of Alexandria, another father of the Church, wrote, *“Those who obey the Lord and through him live according to the Scriptures are fully transformed in the likeness of their Master. They reach the point of living like God in the flesh.”*³

The same consistency between belief and behavior is asked of those who do not profess a specific religious creed. The deep convictions dictated by their conscience have to be expressed in concrete actions.

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1 See Jas 1:22.

2 Hilary of Poitiers, *Tract. in Psalmum* (Commentary on the Psalms) 13, 1; PL 9, 295.

3 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* (Miscellanies), 7, 16 [ANF-02]

The fruit of “doing” the truth is to come to the light, “to accept” Christ. Jesus promised: “[To] those who love me (...) I will reveal myself.”⁴ He is the “true light.”⁵

Another fruit of doing the truth is the witness that radiates beyond ourselves and into that area of society where we live and work. Jesus said this when he invited us to let our light shine “before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”⁶

A consistent life is more eloquent than any speech could possibly be. Children demand that their parents be consistent. They want them to be united and intent on strengthening the harmony in their family. Citizens expect their elected representatives to be consistent: to faithfully carry out the program agreed upon; to work for the common good; to be honest in the administration of finances. Students ask their teachers to be consistent in their obligation to teach and to educate. Honesty, transparency and competence are required of business owners, employees and professionals...

We also help society to develop by giving a witness of consistency between our beliefs and the concrete choices we make every day.

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This was the experience of people like Nelson Mandela who remained steadfast in his quest for equality, enduring many difficult years in prison, only to emerge victorious as his nation’s leader, or of Martin Luther King, Jr., who paid with his life for being true to his principles. It is also the experience of many men and women who are unknown to us, but no less consistent in the choices they make.

This was the case, for example, of a small business owner who was told to pay a kickback in exchange for new orders. He opted to remain faithful to his principles. It was a difficult decision, because he was fully aware that by remaining honest, he risked losing a large part of his sales. In fact, the warehouse that distributed his products cancelled its orders, bringing his business to the brink of bankruptcy. After a few months, however, the warehouse was forced to reverse its decision: customers had complained because they could no longer find that company’s products in the stores. Being consistent with his values had been rewarded.

4 Jn 14:21.

5 Jn 1:9.

6 Mt 5:16.