

Word of Life February 2016

Console the lonely

“As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.” (Isa 66:13)

This Word of Life was chosen by an ecumenical group in Germany. We are living it together with brothers and sisters from many different churches. Our hope is that our lives throughout the year may be accompanied by this promise from God.

Who hasn't seen crying children throw themselves into their mothers' arms? Whatever the matter is, important or not, the mothers dry their children's tears and hug them with tenderness. Little by little, the children begin to smile again. The mothers' presence and loving kindness are enough.

God behaves like this with us, and compares his love to the comfort a mother can give.

These words show how God speaks to his people upon their return from exile in Babylon. They had seen their homes and the temple demolished and had been deported to a foreign land, where they felt lost and grief-stricken. Now, returning to their homeland, the people had to rebuild on the rubble of that destruction.

Today the tragedy that Israel lived through is being repeated by many war-torn peoples, victims of terrorist atrocities or inhuman exploitation. Houses and streets ripped apart, sites symbolic of a cultural identity razed to the ground, goods pillaged, places of worship destroyed. How many people kidnapped, millions forced to flee, thousands dying in deserts or at sea! It looks like an apocalypse.

This Word of Life is an invitation to believe in God's loving action, even when his presence is not felt. It is a proclamation of hope. He is beside whomever suffers persecution, injustice, exile. He is with us, with our family, with our people. He knows our personal pain and that of the whole human race. He became one of us, to the point of dying on a cross. This is why he knows how to understand us and comfort us. He acts just as a mother who lifts her child onto her lap and gives comfort.

We need to open our eyes and hearts to “see him.” To the extent that we experience the tenderness of his love, we will be able to transmit it to those who live in pain and under trial, so that we become instruments of consolation. Paul, too, suggests it to the Corinthians: “console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God” (2 Cor 1:4).

This was also a deeply personal and specific experience of Chiara Lubich, as written in her book *Meditations*: “Lord, give me all who are lonely ... I have felt in my heart the passion that fills your heart for all of the forsakenness in which the whole of the world is drifting. I love everyone who is sick and alone. Who consoles their weeping? Who mourns their slow death? Who presses to their own heart, the heart in despair? My God, let me be in this world the tangible sacrament of your love; let me be your arms that press to themselves and consume in love all the loneliness of the world.”

Fr. Fabio Ciardi, OMI

Each month the Focolare offers a Scripture passage as a guide and inspiration for daily living. Ever since the Focolare’s earliest years, founder Chiara Lubich (1920–2008) wrote her own commentaries each month. Now Fr. Fabio Ciardi, OMI, theologian and close collaborator of Lubich, heads a group of scripture experts who have been entrusted with the task of writing the Word of Life commentaries, reflecting her thoughts and her spirituality of unity.

This Word of Life is translated into 96 different languages and reaches several million people worldwide through the media. This monthly leaflet is also a supplement to *Living City*, the Focolare magazine (livingcitymagazine.com). For information and to subscribe to this leaflet or to the magazine, write to: *Living City*, 202 Comforter Blvd, Hyde Park, NY 12538; tel: 845-229-0496; e-mail: livingcity@livingcitymagazine.com. Visit focolare.org (international) or focolare.us (U.S.).

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Read more

Gillet, Florence. “The Dynamic of Loving Jesus Forsaken,” *The Choice of Jesus Forsaken in the Theological Perspective of Chiara Lubich*. New City Press, 2015, p. 29.

Lubich, Chiara. “Make yourself one,” *The Art of Loving*. New City Press, 2005, p. 69.

Lubich, Chiara. “What Jesus Forsaken Generates,” *The Cry of Jesus Crucified and Forsaken*. New City Press, 2001, p. 53.

Next month

March 2016

“The kingdom of God has come to you” (Lk 11:20).