

Focolare Word of Life
October 2018

“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law” (Gal 5:18).

Paul was writing to the Christians of Galatia, a region now located in central Turkey. He himself had evangelized this area, and he cared about the people very much.

Some people in that community thought Christians should follow all the precepts of the Law of Moses in order to be accepted by God and be saved.

Paul, on the other hand, affirmed that we are no longer "under the Law" because Jesus himself, who is the Son of God and Savior of humanity, became the Way to the Father for all people through his death and resurrection. Faith in Jesus opens our hearts to the action of God's own Spirit, who guides and accompanies us along the pathways of life.

Therefore, according to Paul, it's not a question of "not observing the Law" but of going to the deepest root of the Law and becoming aware of all it demands, allowing oneself to be guided by the Spirit.

In fact, a few lines earlier Paul said: "The whole Law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal 5:14).

In Christian love for God and neighbor, there is both the freedom and the responsibility of being God's children. Following Jesus' example, we are asked to love everyone, to take the initiative in loving others, and to love them as ourselves — even those we consider enemies.

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The love that comes from God urges us to always act responsibly — with our family, at work and wherever we go. We are called to build relationships that are peaceful, just and lawful.

The law of love lays the most solid foundation for our life in society, as Maria from Paris explained: "I teach in a school on the outskirts of Paris. It is in a multicultural area, and many of the students come from disadvantaged families. I organize cross-curricular projects that enable teamwork and foster a sense of family among my colleagues. This strengthens our credibility in inviting the students to do the same. I have learned not to expect results right away, even when I see little change in a student. The important thing is to continue to believe in them, accompanying, appreciating and rewarding them. Sometimes I feel I am not making any impact but there are other times when I see tangible proof that the relationships we have built are bearing fruit. This happened with a girl who was being disruptive in class. I explained to her calmly and firmly that, to live in harmony, everyone must do their part. Later, she wrote to me: "Sorry about my behavior; it will not happen again. I know you expect action from us and not just words, and I want to commit myself to this. You are

someone who gives us students the right values and the desire to succeed.”¹

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Living life with a loving attitude is not simply the fruit of our own efforts. It is the Spirit who has been given to us gives us the strength to grow in freedom from the slavery of selfishness and to live in love. And we can continually ask for the Holy Spirit.

Chiara Lubich wrote: “Love is what moves us; it suggests how to respond to situations and to the choices we are called to make. Love teaches us how to discern: this is good and I’ll do it; this is bad and I won’t do it. Love is what urges us to act in a way that is best for others. We are not guided by an external force but by the principle of the new life placed within us by the Spirit. Our heart, mind and strength, and all our abilities, can walk according to the Spirit because they are unified by love and completely opened to God’s plan for us and for society. We are free to love.”²

Letizia Magri

Each month the Focolare offers a Scripture passage as a guide and inspiration for daily living. Focolare’s founder, Chiara Lubich (1920–2008), wrote these commentaries for many years. Now an international commission continues this tradition, faithful to her spirituality of unity. Letizia Magri, an expert in marriage and family from the John Paul II Institute in Rome, is head of this commission and part of the Focolare’s center for the family.

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Read more:

Lubich, Chiara. “Receptive to the Holy Spirit,” *Heaven on Earth*, New City Press: HydePark, New York, 2000, pp. 125-126.

Lubich, Chiara. “The inner master,” *Essential Writings*, New City Press: Hyde Park, New York, 2007, p. 146.

Next month:

“Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.” (Rev 3:20)

¹ “A teacher in the suburbs of Paris,” spoken testimony by Maria A. (Paris) at the conference “The great attraction of the present time”, Castel Gandolfo, March 3, 2018 (see www.focolare.org).

² Lubich, Chiara. “That ‘inner’ voice”, *Città Nuova*, vol. 50, no.10, May 2006, p.9.