

## ***Word of Life April 2022***

***“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” (Mark.16:15)***

In Mark’s Gospel, the last words of the risen Jesus are found in the passage that refers to Jesus’ post-resurrection appearance to the Apostles.

They are at table, as we often saw them together with Jesus even before his passion and death, but this time the small community bears the signs of failure. There are only 11 of them left, instead of the 12 that Jesus had wanted with him. At the time of the crucifixion some of his followers denied knowing him, while others fled.

In this last, decisive encounter, Jesus reprimands them for having hearts closed to the words of those who had borne witness to his resurrection (Mark 16:9–13). Yet at the same time, he confirms that they were chosen by him.

Despite their frailty, once again he entrusts them with the proclamation of the Gospel, the good news he makes incarnate through his life and with his words.

After this solemn discourse, the risen Jesus returns to the Father, but at the same time remains with the disciples, confirming all they say with remarkable signs.

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The community sent by Jesus to continue his mission was, therefore, not a group of people who were perfect. Instead, they were people called to “be” with him (Mark 3:14-15), to experience his presence and his patient, merciful love.

Then, only by virtue of this experience, were they sent out to “proclaim to every creature” that God is close to them.

The success of the mission certainly does not depend on personal abilities but on the presence of the risen Jesus, who entrusts himself to his disciples and to the community of believers, in which the Gospel grows by being put into practice and proclaimed, as explained in Vatican II document *Dei Verbum* (8).

What we can do as Christians, therefore, is to proclaim God's love with our lives and words. We can reach out to others with courage and generosity, and offer to everyone, with sensitivity and respect, the treasures of the risen Jesus that open our hearts to hope.

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It is a question of always bearing witness to Jesus and never to ourselves. Indeed, we are asked to “deny” ourselves, to “diminish” so that he might grow. We need to make space within ourselves for the power of his Spirit, who urges us to be builders of fraternity, as Chiara Lubich wrote in a Gospel commentary in June 2003.

“I must follow the Holy Spirit who, every time I meet a brother or sister, makes me ready to ‘make myself one’ with him or her, to serve them to perfection. It is the Spirit who gives me the strength to love them if in some way they are enemies, and who enriches my heart with mercy to know how to forgive and to be able to understand their needs.

“The Holy Spirit makes me zealous in communicating the most beautiful things in my soul when it is the right time to do so...

“Jesus’ love is revealed and shared with others through my love... With and through this love of God in our hearts, we can go far and share our own discovery with many other people... until the other person, deeply touched by the love of God in us, wants to ‘become one’ with us, in a mutual exchange of help, ideals, projects and feelings. Only then will we be able to share the word of God, and it will be a gift, in the reciprocity of love.”

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“To every creature” is a perspective that makes us aware of our belonging to the great mosaic of creation. We are particularly sensitive nowadays, and young people are often at the forefront of this new direction within humanity. In Gospel style, they confirm with deeds what they announce with words.

Robert, from New Zealand, shared his experience on the web: “An ongoing activity in our region supports the restoration of the port of Porirua in the southern part of the Wellington region in New Zealand. This initiative has involved the local authorities, the Māori Catholic community and the local tribe.

“Our aim is to support this tribe in their desire to lead the restoration of the harbor, ensure that the waters flow clean, and allow shellfish harvesting and routine fishing without fear of pollution.

“These initiatives have been successful and have created a real community spirit. The challenge is to keep this from being a one-time event and instead maintain a long-term program that brings help, support and really makes a difference on the ground.”

Letizia Magri

Next month:

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.” (Jn 13:34)