

'You have already been cleansed by the word I have spoken to you.' (Jn 15:3)

After the Last Supper with the apostles, Jesus left the Upper Room and walked towards the Mount of Olives. The Eleven were with him: Judas Iscariot had already gone away and was soon to betray Jesus.

It was a solemn and dramatic moment. During the supper, Jesus had given a long farewell speech because he had wanted to say important things to his closest followers and deliver words not to be forgotten.

His apostles were Jews who knew the Scriptures and Jesus had reminded them of the very familiar image of the vine. In the sacred texts, this represents the Jewish people who were the object of God's care. In fact, God is an attentive and expert farmer. Now it is Jesus who speaks of himself as the vine that conveys the lifeblood of the Father's love to his disciples. They must, therefore, focus above all on remaining united to him.

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One way to remain united to Jesus is to welcome his Word. It allows God to enter into our hearts to make them 'pure', that is, cleansed of selfishness and fit to bear an abundance of quality fruit.

The Father loves us and knows better than we do what makes us feel unburdened and free from the useless weight of all the unnecessary things to which we are attached, from negative judgements, from the anxious search to make everything work to our advantage and from the illusion of keeping everything and everyone under control. In our hearts there are also positive aspirations and projects but these too could take the place of God himself and make us lose the generous momentum of evangelical life. That is why he sometimes intervenes in our life through circumstances and painful experiences, behind which there is always his gaze of love.

The fullness of joy is the fruit that the Gospel promises to those who allow themselves to be pruned and renewed by God's love. This is a special joy that blossoms even in the midst of tears and overflows from the heart, flooding the surrounding soil. It is like a small foretaste of resurrection.

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Living the Word makes us step outside ourselves and meet our brothers and sisters with love, beginning with those nearest to us: in our families, in our cities and in every area of life. It enables us to create friendships that form a network of positive relationships, aiming at the fulfilment of the commandment of mutual love which builds a sense of family.

Meditating on this phrase from John's Gospel, Focolare founder, Chiara Lubich wrote, *"How can we live, then, so we too can deserve Jesus' praise? We can put every Word of God into practice, feeding on it moment by moment and making our existence a work of continuous re-evangelization. Doing this, we will have the same thoughts and feelings as Jesus; we will relive him in the world and show the divine purity and transparency that the Gospel gives to a society that is often caught up in evil and sin.*

During this month, then, if it is possible (that is, if other people share our intentions), let us try, in a particular way, to put into practice that word which expresses the commandment of mutual love. For the evangelist John, [...] there is a link between the Word of Christ and the new commandment. According to him, it is in mutual love that we live the Word with its many effects - purification, holiness, sinlessness, fruitfulness and closeness to God. If we live in isolation from one another, we cannot resist the pressures of the world for long, whereas, in mutual love we find an environment capable of protecting an authentic Christian life."

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