

# Word of Life Resources

No. 09-23

September 2023

Workbook for Word of Life Meetings



focolare  
m o v e m e n t

Dear Word of Life group leaders:

This month's **Word of Life**, taken from Psalm 145 [144], exhorts us to bless and praise the name of the Lord every day. If, as the commentary to this Word says, the Psalms are an individual and collective reflection of the religious life of the people of Israel, we too, trying to live this Word, could become a living reflection of Jesus in each one and in our midst. Because of the hectic pace of life, there can sometimes be a tendency to downplay the importance of prayer because it seems to distance us from reality, so much so that we even sing in the liturgy, and not for nothing, that "**it is not enough to pray!**".

In the **In-Depth section**, we find a secret that Chiara suggests **to us to make life a constant prayer; to repeat in every circumstance the invocation of Psalm 15 [16]: "You Lord, are my only good"**. In this way, by always keeping our eyes fixed on what is valuable, we will be able to prevent any attachment that may stand in the way of our holy journey.

Instead, in the **News** section, you will find an excerpt from one of Pope Francis' homilies in the context of World Youth Day; alluding to a passage from the Gospel, the *Pope invites us to let "Jesus get in the boat", to listen to him and "lower the nets anew with hope", "not to let ourselves be carried away by fatigue and weariness" because the risk of "tiredness of the good" is to fall into worldliness and end up being only "administrators of the sacred"*.

With the intention of delving more and more into the life of prayer and the interior life, we endeavor with you, especially in this month, to praise and bless the name of the Lord" as the Word of Life for this month says.

*The Team of the Word of Life Workbook*

# Chiara Lubich: A solemn change of direction



*On March 14, 2008, 15 years ago, Chiara Lubich concluded her earthly life. A few years earlier, in a worldwide Conference Call she quoted the short but intense verse from Psalm 15 (16) ‘You Lord, are my only good’ and invited the communities of the Movement around the world to approach this prayer by giving it a central place in their daily lives.*

In specific circumstances, an excellent prayer that we can say with renewed enthusiasm and with all our mind and heart is: “You Lord; are my only good.” Ps 16:2.

In fact, we all realize that, quite often, while we are working, writing, speaking, resting, or doing something else, some slight attachment can creep into our hearts, attachment to ourselves, to things, or to other people. Giving in to these would be a terrible setback for our spiritual life.

Saint John of the Cross said: “It makes no difference whether a bird is held down by a thread or by a rope. However fine the thread is, the bird is bound as if by a cord until it can break it to fly away. And he continues saying: “It is the same for a person who is bound to something. Despite all their virtues, they will never achieve the freedom of union with God.”

# In-depth

In these situations, we must really act immediately, and nothing can be more helpful – this is a recent experience of mine – than to say often to Jesus forsaken: “You, Lord, are my only good. My only good. I have no other.”

I believe this is a very important prayer and extremely pleasing to God. It prevents us from being covered with the dust of earthly things. In living this, we are amazed – I am always struck by this and always have been – by how that phrase, “only,” (“You Lord are my only good”) gives a solemn change of direction to our spiritual life. It immediately puts us straight, as if it were the trustworthy needle in the compass of our journey towards God.

Moreover, this way of acting is very much in line with our spirituality, in which the positive aspect prevails. By living what is good, whatever is wrong disappears. We are not so much called to detach ourselves from something (from ourselves or things or people) but to fill ourselves with something (with love for him who is “everything” for us). Instead of saying “no,” we prefer to say “yes.”

This prayer, “You, Lord are my only good,” is a wonderful way to live as true Christians who love God with all their heart and soul, and not halfheartedly.

It’s also a sublime way to prepare ourselves for all the times we meet him in his daily inspirations. It will prepare us for our solemn meeting with him, at the dawn of that eternal day when the only thing that matters will be our love for God, and for him, our love for every neighbor.

“You, Lord, are my only good.” What wisdom, what understanding, what light, what strength, what love, what perfection there is in those few words! May the Lord grant us to experience all the power contained in them.

Originally published here: <https://www.focolare.org/en/2023/03/14/italiano-chiara-lubich-solenne-sterzata/>

See the video: <https://youtu.be/Bf-QHf9vOp4>

**Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.  
(Ps 145 [144]:2)**

The quotation from Scripture that is offered to help us on our journey this month is a prayer. It is a verse taken from Psalm 145. The Psalms are compositions that reflect the individual and collective religious experience of the people of Israel during their historical journey as they faced the challenges of daily life. Prayer expressed as poetry rises up to the Lord as lament, supplication, thanksgiving and praise. This encompasses a range of emotions and attitudes that men and women experience during their lifetime in their relationship with the living God.

The underlying theme of Psalm 145 is the kingship of God. The psalmist, based on his personal experience, acclaims God's greatness: 'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;' (v. 3); he magnifies his goodness and the universality of his love: 'The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.' (v. 9); he acknowledges his faithfulness: 'The Lord is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.' (v. 13b), and he even goes so far as to involve every living thing in a cosmic song: 'All flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever' (v.21).

**Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever**

In modern times, however, people may sometimes feel abandoned and alone. They fear that what happens each day is a matter of chance, just a succession of events devoid of meaning and purpose.

This psalm reassures and proclaims hope: 'God is the creator of heaven and earth. He is the faithful keeper of the covenant that binds him to his people. He is the One who does justice to the oppressed, gives the bread that sustains the hungry, and frees the captives. It is he who opens the eyes of the blind, raises up the fallen, loves the righteous, protects the stranger, sustains the orphan and the widow ...'. i

## **Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever**

This word invites us, first of all, to cherish our personal relationship with God by accepting his love and mercy without reservation. It invites us to place ourselves before this mystery and to listen to his voice. This is the foundation of all prayer. But this love of God is never separated from that for our neighbor. When we imitate God the Father in concretely loving every brother and sister, especially the least, those who are rejected by others and those who are lonely, we come to perceive his presence in our daily lives. Chiara Lubich, when invited to speak of her Christian experience before an assembly of Buddhists, summed it up this way: ‘... the heart of my experience is this: the more one loves human beings, the more one finds God. The more one finds God, the more one loves men and women.’ ii

## **Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever**

But there is another way to find him. In recent decades humanity has gained a new awareness of the great challenge of ecological problems. Young people in particular are driving forward the recognition of a need for change: they propose a more sober lifestyle, new development goals, and the search for alternative sources of energy. They also show commitment to the right of all inhabitants of the planet to have clean water, food and air. In this way human beings can not only rediscover their relationship with nature but also praise God as, filled with amazement, they discover his tenderness toward all creation.

This is the experience of Venant M. who, as a child in his native Burundi, used to wake up at dawn to the sound of birdsong and then travel dozens of kilometers in the forest to go to school. He felt fully in tune with the trees, animals, streams, hills, and with his companions. He had a sense of being close to nature and felt he was a living part of an ecosystem in which creatures and Creator were in total harmony. This awareness became praise, not just in that moment but throughout the whole day.

Some people may ask about those of us who live in cities. ‘Safeguarding nature is a rare occurrence in our concrete metropolises built by human hand amid the din of the world.

Yet, if we wish, the sight of blue sky glimpsed between the tops of skyscrapers is enough to remind us of God; a ray of sunshine that succeeds in penetrating between the bars of a prison is enough; a flower, a meadow, a child's face... ' iii

Edited by Augusto Parody Reyes and the Word of Life team.

i St. John Paul II General Audience 2 Jul 2003

ii M. Vandeleene 'Io, il Fratello & Dio' in the writings of C. Lubich

iii C. Lubich Link Up telephone call , edited by M Vandeleene, Rome 2019

# Points to reflect on and Points for Dialogue

- **The prayer made poetry rises to the Lord as lamentation, supplication, thanksgiving and praise.** From this perspective, there is a whole variety of feelings and attitudes with which human beings express their life and their relationship with the living God.
- **However, modern man sometimes feels lost, with the impression of being left to his own devices.** He fears that the vicissitudes of his days are in the hands of chance, in a succession of events devoid of meaning and goal.
- **This psalm bears a reassuring announcement of hope: «God is the creator of heaven and earth; he is a faithful custodian of the pact that binds him to his people.** He is the one who does justice to the oppressed, gives bread to the hungry, and frees the captives. He is the one who opens the eyes of the blind, who straightens those who are already bent, who loves the just, who guards the pilgrims, who sustains the orphan and the widow [...]».
- Since **this love is never separated from the love of neighbor, when we imitate God the Father in loving each brother and sister** in a concrete way – particularly the last, the discarded, the loneliest–, we are able to perceive in the day by day his presence in our life.
- **Chiara Lubich summed it up this way** in an assembly of Buddhists to which she was invited to share her Christian experience: *«The core of my experience consists in this: the more one loves their neighbor, the more one finds God. The more one finds God, the more one is loved».*

## Points for dialogue during the meeting

- To help us on our way, what is proposed to us in the Word of Scripture this month?
- What are psalms?
- What does the psalmist exalt in this psalm?
- What does this psalm carry?
- What can the Word of Life help us with this month and what does it invite us to do?
- Is there another way to find God following the last decades?
- In our cities and urban metropolises is nature saved?
- Have you taken any action so that it is not so?
- Have you experienced total harmony as Venant from Burundi, do you have experiences like his?



# Pope to Portugal's Church leaders: 'Scandals call us to ongoing purification.'



*Pope Francis reflects on the conflicts, injustices, and lack of hope that are crippling the world today and on how the Church, whose "face has been marred by scandals," is called to find new ways to go forward, fueling hope for the future and "sailing boldly into the sea of evangelization and of mission."*

**By Linda Bordoni**

Praying Vespers in the 16th century Jeronimos Monastery in Lisbon on the first day of his visit to Portugal for World Youth Day 2023, Pope Francis urged the clergy and religious to

proclaim the saving message of the Gospel with renewed impetus in a world in which there is so much darkness.

Addressing Portuguese Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Consecrated Persons, Seminarians, and Pastoral Workers gathered in the ancient monastery on Wednesday evening, **the Pope reflected** on the readings of the Vespers that tell of the Lord's saving grace and how Jesus changed the lives of his disciples by bringing God's closeness into the places and situations in which "people live, work and hope."

## Find new ways to follow the Lord

Acknowledging the weariness that can burden men and women of the Church in times that are "buffeted by social and cultural changes and increasingly marked by secularism, indifference to God and growing detachment from the practice of the faith," the Pope invited them "to bring their struggles and tears to the Lord" and with open hearts find new ways to follow Him.



Vespers at Lisbon's Jeronimos Monastery with Pope Francis

That weariness, the Holy Father said, “is often accentuated by the disappointment and anger with which some people view the Church, at times due to our poor witness and the scandals that have marred her face and call us to a humble and ongoing purification, starting with the anguished cry of the victims, who must always be accepted and listened to.”

---

*“The anguished cry of victims must always be accepted and listened to.”*

---

“Whenever we feel discouraged, we can feel tempted to leave the boat and become entangled in the nets of resignation and pessimism,” the Pope said, Jesus comes to us “amid our feelings of solitude and our crises, in order to help us begin anew.”

## **No to the 'administrators of the sacred'**

Underscoring the relevance of this invitation, the Pope noted that when we feel discouragement and "retire" from apostolic zeal, "we risk becoming mere "administrators of the sacred: "It is very sad when a person who has consecrated his life to God becomes an "official", a mere administrator of things. It is very sad," and he appealed to those who may be bored and are living the mission as "a kind of job" to make room for "that repeated call of Jesus" and allow ourselves to be seduced by it.

Dear brothers and sisters, Pope Francis said: “We are surely living in difficult times, but the Lord is asking this Church: ‘Do you want to leave the boat and plunge into disillusion, or will you let me enter and allow the newness of my words once more to take the helm? Do you want only to preserve the past which lies behind you, or do you want once again to lower the nets with enthusiasm for the catch?’”

“The Lord,” he said, “is asking us to revive our “restless” enthusiasm for the spread of the Gospel,” and reiterating the need for a renewed missionary zeal, he asked his “Dear Portuguese friends” to set out from the shore, “not to conquer the world but to make it exult in the comforting joy of the Gospel.”

“This is not the time to stop and give up, to drag the boat to shore or to look back. We must not take flight from the present out of fear or take refuge in forms and practices of the past. Now is the God-given time of grace to sail boldly into the sea of evangelization and of mission,” he added.

---

*"Now is the God-given time of grace to sail boldly into the sea of evangelization and of mission."*

---

Thus, Pope Francis had three indications which, he said, are inspired by the Gospel.



Pope Francis leads Vespers at Lisbon's Jeronimus Monastery

## **Put out into the deep, share the journey, evangelize**

“First,” he said, *“Put out into the deep.”* To lower the nets anew, he explained, it is necessary to leave disappointments and inertia, and *“pass from defeatism to faith.”*

“A second choice,” he continued, is “*to work together in offering pastoral care.*”

This indication allowed the Pope to underscore, yet again, his belief that the Church is synodal: “The Church is communion, mutual assistance, and shared journey.”

---

*“The Church is communion, mutual assistance, and shared journey.”*

---

That, he explained, is the aim of the current Synod, which will have its first general assembly in October.

“On the boat of the Church, there has to be room for everyone: all the baptized are called on board to lower the nets, becoming personally involved in the preaching of the Gospel.”

Acknowledging that this “is a great challenge,” he said that it is something to be done

“without worldliness, yet not without the world.”

And speaking off-the-cuff to highlight this crucial concept, the Pope said, “Clericalism is one of the most serious evils that can happen to the Church,” and he urged those present to overcome this risk “without ideologies, without worldliness.”

“In the Church, we help each other, we support one another, and we feel ourselves called to spread a climate of constructive fraternity beyond our own walls,” he said.



Pope Francis leads Vespers at Lisbon's Jeronimus Monastery

“The third choice,” he said, is *to become fishers of men*.

Noting that there is so much darkness in today’s society, Pope Francis lamented the fact that “We seem to have lost a sense of enthusiasm, the courage to dream, the strength to confront challenges and to be confident about the future.”

He described the course of humanity as one that sails “amid doubts and economic uncertainty, an impoverishment of social friendship, and lack of hope.”

“As Church, we are entrusted with the task of putting out into the waters of this sea and casting the nets of the Gospel, not pointing fingers but bringing to the men and women of our time an offer of new life, the life of Jesus,” he continued.

## **'Bring the openness of the Gospel to today's multicultural society'**

We are called, the Holy Father said, “to bring the openness of the Gospel to a multicultural society; to bring the closeness of the Father to situations of growing uncertainty and poverty, especially among young people. To bring the love of Christ wherever families are

fragile, and relationships wounded. To transmit the joy of the Spirit where discouragement and fatalism reign.”

---

*"We are called to bring the closeness of the Father to situations of growing uncertainty and poverty, especially among young people"*

---



Vespers at Jeronimos Monastery in Lisbon with Pope Francis

"Dear brothers and sisters," Pope Francis concluded, spelling out the fact that his invitation is directed to all - lay people, religious men and women, priests, bishops, everyone - "do not be afraid, cast your nets (...) do not accuse others but feel the invitation of Jesus" and don't turn the Church into a customs house.

It's an invitation, he said, to everyone: "To the righteous, to those who are well off, to those who are happily married and to everyone else" because the Church is made of everyone, "righteous and sinners, good and bad, everyone, everyone, everyone. And then the Lord help us to sort that out!"

Originally published here: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-08/pope-lisbon-vespers-bishops-clergy-consecrated-homily.html>

the full homily can be found here:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2023/documents/20230802-portogallo-omelia.html>



# Experience

Living the Gospel: “Live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you” (2 Cor. 13:11)



*Letting God dwell in us: this is the starting point to safeguard and give joyful witness of the inestimable value of unity and peace, in charity and truth; to enrich ourselves and be seeds of goodness and brotherhood for the world.*

## **Without measuring hatred**

I live in a Ukrainian town on the border with Slovakia. We are not being bombed but we experience the terrible consequences of the war: displaced people with all their needs, the demand for torches and candles, medicines, blankets... A great darkness has descended on our land. News about people who betray others, of those who get rich in these terrible situations, of those who exploit others are the order of the day: when it triumphs, evil has no rules, no limits. But in spite of everything, something else happens: the people here feel involved in the pain of others and look for solutions. The need for warmth, protection and solidarity has returned to families. I witness this paradox of a war of evil and of the triumph of good. We tell the story of Chiara Lubich and her first followers: they too began during a war and they did not measure hatred, but turned on good and then spread everywhere. The forces of evil will not prevail. Our gratitude is a true prayer that rises to heaven like a song of praise to the God who is Love.

(S.P. – Ukraine)

## **A chain of love**

In the waiting room of my shop, the customers usually exchange news and since I hadn't seen Mrs. Adele, an elderly woman who sometimes came to us, for a long time, I asked one of them for her news. So I learned that Adele was seriously ill and, driven by the desire to see her again, one day I decided to visit her. I found Mrs. Adele, alone and without relatives, completely abandoned. I immediately I circulated a request for help, looking for someone who could keep

## Experience

her company. Three clients responded immediately. A kind of competition started until one of their sons worked hard to get her admitted to a home that provided assistance and care. I too volunteered to give my services as a hairdresser, not only for Adele but for anyone. Adele's story has shown me that it is enough to begin with concrete acts of charity; the chain of love then unfolds quickly and effectively.

(F.D.R. – Italy)

Originally published <https://www.focolare.org/en/2023/06/16/living-the-gospel-live-in-peace-and-the-god-of-love-and-peace-will-be-with-you-2-cor-1311italiano-vangelo-vissuto-vivete-in-pace-e-il-dio-dellamore-e-della-pace-sara-con-voi-2-c/>