

commandment.”<sup>5</sup> And when this reciprocal love is lived by his followers, it makes “almost visible” the presence of the Risen Lord within a community that is gathered in his name, in his love.<sup>6</sup>

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5. Jn 17:21: “Love one another as I have loved you.”

6. See Mt 18:20.

Each month the Focolare chooses a Scripture passage as a guide and inspiration for daily living. The commentary on it was originally written by founder, Chiara Lubich (1920–2008). Today this Word of Life, written by an international commission and translated into 96 different languages, reaches several million people worldwide.

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## “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

(Ps 23:1)

Psalm 23 is perhaps the most well-known and best loved of all the psalms. It is a song of trust in God, but also a joyful profession of faith by someone who is part of the people of Israel, to whom God, through the prophets, had promised to be their shepherd. The psalmist also expresses his personal happiness in knowing that he is protected by the Temple, a place of shelter and grace.<sup>1</sup> And at the same time, because of this experience, he wants to encourage also other people to trust in the presence of the Lord.

## “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

The image of the shepherd with his flock is very dear to all biblical literature. To understand it fully, we need to imagine the arid and rocky deserts of the Middle East. The shepherd guides his flock, who are docile and allow themselves to be led, for without him they would get lost and die. The sheep

1. See Ps 23:6.

have to learn to rely on him and listen to his voice. Above all, he is their constant companion.

### **“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”**

This psalm invites us to strengthen our intimate relationship with God by experiencing his love. Some may wonder why the author goes so far as to say, “I shall not want”? In our daily life we encounter all kinds of problems and challenges—with our health, in the family, at work—not to mention the immense suffering of so many of our brothers and sisters due to war, natural disasters often caused by climate change, forced migration, acts of violence, and so on.

### **“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”**

Perhaps the key to understanding this verse lies in the one that follows it: “for you are with me.”<sup>2</sup> This states the certainty of the love of God who always accompanies us and leads us to live our life in a whole new way. Chiara Lubich wrote: “It is one thing to know we can have recourse to God,

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2. Ps 23:4.

who exists, who cares for us and has redeemed us of our sins, and totally another thing to live with the conviction that we are God’s beloved, for this banishes all loneliness, all sense of abandonment, any misgivings or any fear that may restrain us. (...) We come to realize that we are loved, and believe with all our heart in this love. We abandon ourselves trustingly to him and are ready to follow wherever he leads. Life’s circumstances, sad or joyful, are illuminated by God’s love that wills or permits everything that happens.”<sup>3</sup>

### **“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”**

The one who brought this beautiful prophecy to fulfilment is Jesus. In John’s Gospel he does not hesitate to call himself the “good shepherd.” The relationship with this shepherd is something special; it is very personal and intimate. “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.”<sup>4</sup> He leads his sheep to graze in the pastures of his Word, which gives life, particularly the Word that contains the “new

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3. Chiara Lubich, *Essential Writings – Spirituality, Dialogue, Culture*, New City Press, New York, 2006, pg. 55

4. Jn 10:14.