

## “Test everything; hold fast to what is good.” (1 Thes 5:21)

The Word of Life for this month is taken from a series of recommendations that the Apostle Paul gave in his farewell message to the Thessalonian community. He told them: “Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.”<sup>1</sup> To do this, they needed to give space to both prophecy and discernment, dialogue and listening. These were Paul’s instructions to a community that had only recently embarked on the journey of faith.

Among the various gifts of the Holy Spirit, Paul highly esteemed that of prophecy.<sup>2</sup> The prophet is not one who predicts the future, but rather one who has the gift of seeing and understanding the plan of God for the individual and the community. But all gifts are guided by the greatest gift, which is charity, brotherly love.<sup>3</sup> Saint Augustine of Hippo affirms that only charity allows a person to discern the attitude they should have in each situation.<sup>4</sup>

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We need to be able to look not only at the personal gifts of the people around us, but also at their great potential, including their various opinions and points of view. We can engage with them, even with people we just happen to meet on a casual basis. What’s important is that each party is sincere and recognizes that their point of view might be limited.

This Word of Life could be a motto for everyone developing the skill of dialogue thus reducing the possibility of confrontation. Listening to another person does not mean accepting everything they say. Rather it requires that we realize that we can find something good in what the other person says, and thus open up a true dialogue of mind and heart. It means to listen to our neighbor and thus make a space so that we can build something together.

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Father Timothy Radcliffe, one of the theologians who spoke at the Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church, said that “the most courageous thing we can do in this synod is be honest with each other about our doubts and questions, those for which we do not have clear answers. In this way we will approach each other as companions who are searching, and are beggars of the truth.”<sup>5</sup>

1. 1 Thes 5:19-22.

2. Cf. John Paul II, General Audience, June 24, 1992, no. 7.

3. Cf. 1 Cor 13.

4. Cf. Augustine of Hippo, Ep. Jo. 7, 8.

5. Father Timothy Radcliffe, Meditation No. 3, “Friendship,” Synod on Synodality, Rome, Italy, October 2, 2023.

In a conversation with some Focolare members, Margaret Karram commented on this reflection, saying among other things: “Thinking about this, I realized that many times I did not have the courage to really say what I thought - perhaps out of fear that I wouldn’t be understood, perhaps not to say something completely different from the majority opinion. I realized that to be ‘beggars of the truth’ means to have that attitude of closeness, one to another, in which we all want what God wants, in which we all seek the good together.”<sup>6</sup>

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Antía shared her experience of participating in a performing arts group called “Mosaic.” It began in Spain in 2017, as a local project sponsored by the Focolare musical group, Gen Rosso. Its goal is to help young people experience fraternal relationships through art and dance workshops. Antía shared: “This project resonated with my values because I have always wanted a world where there is fraternity among all, in which everyone - including the most vulnerable, the children, the inexperienced - can offer their contribution. ‘Mosaic’ has helped me come to believe that a more united world is not a utopia, despite the obstacles, difficulties and hard work it requires. I grew a lot by working in this group because our conversations were very candid, and I learned to give up my own ideas even though they seemed to me to be the best. The result is that ‘what is good’ is built together, piece by piece, by all of us.”<sup>7</sup>

Prepared by Patrizia Mazzola  
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6. Margaret Karram, President of the Focolare Movement, Rocca di Papa, February 3, 2024.
  7. Mosaic GRLP adheres to the “Strong without Violence” project, which offers three-day multidisciplinary workshops to young people who come together from different cities. These workshops strive to convey the values of non-violence, peace and dialogue through various art forms.

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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. For audio and videos resources about the WoL, visit [focolaremedia.com](https://focolaremedia.com)

