There are no translations available.

"Repent, and believe in the Gospel"
(Mk 1:15)

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus begins his announcement to the world, his message of salvation, with these words: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel."

The coming of Jesus marks the beginning of a new era, an era of grace and salvation. His first words are an invitation to embrace this great change, this reality of the kingdom of God that he brings within reach for all people, close to every person.

And he immediately indicates the way: repent and believe in the Gospel — that is, radically change your life and accept the word that God, in and through Jesus, is addressing to humanity in all times.

Repentance and faith must go hand in hand: there cannot be one without the other; rather, both spring forth from contact with the living word, from the presence of Jesus who today, too, repeats to the crowds:

"Repent, and believe in the Gospel."

The word of God accepted and lived out brings about a complete change of mentality, that is, repentance. Christ's sentiments as they relate to circumstances, individuals and society become instilled in the hearts of all — Europeans, Asians, Australians, Americans, Africans.

But how can the Gospel work the miracle of profound conversion, giving us a new and vibrant faith? The secret lies in the words of Jesus and the mystery they hold. They are not simply exhortations, suggestions, indications, directives, orders or commands. Jesus himself is present in his words to us. His words are Jesus himself.

So it is possible to find Jesus in his word. And by welcoming the word into our hearts as he wants it to be welcomed (that is, ready to translate it into life), we are one with him and he is born and grows within us. This is why each one of us can and must welcome this pressing and demanding invitation of Jesus.

"Repent, and believe in the Gospel."

Some people might consider the words of the Gospel to be too lofty, too out of touch and difficult, too distant from our common way of living and thinking. They might feel tempted to close themselves off from these words and get discouraged.

But this can only happen if they intend to move this mountain of disbelief on their own. Instead, living just one word of the Gospel is enough to experience unexpected help, unique strength, a light for our path (cf Ps. 119:105). Precisely because each word of the Gospel is a presence of God, connecting with it makes people free, purifies, converts, brings comfort and joy, and gives wisdom.

"Repent, and believe in the Gospel."

How often these words can be light for us during our day! Every time we run up against our own weakness or that of others, every time following Jesus seems to be impossible or absurd, every time problems threaten to overcome us, these words can give us wings. They can be like a breath of fresh air, a stimulus to begin anew.

A small, quick change of course would be enough to emerge from the limits of our ego and open ourselves up to God and experience another life, the true one.

Moreover, if we are able to share this experience with friends whose code of life is the Gospel, we will see the Christian community blossoming or re-blossoming around us.

The word of God lived out and communicated works this miracle too: it gives rise to a visible community that becomes yeast and salt for society, bearing witness to Christ in every corner of the globe.

- Chiara Lubich

Each month a Scripture passage is offered as a guide and inspiration for daily living. This commentary, translated into 96 different languages and dialects, reaches several million people worldwide through print, radio, television and the Internet. Ever since the Focolare's beginnings, founder Chiara Lubich (1920–2008) wrote her commentaries each month. This one was originally published in February 1997.

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Read more on this topic:

- Chiara Lubich, "Thoughts: To be re-evangelized," Essential Writings. New City Press, 2006, p. 127.

- Chiara Lubich, The Art of Loving . New City Press, 2010.

- Madeline Pecora Nugent and Julian Stead, O.S.B., Love-Ability: Becoming Lovable by Caring for Yourself and Others .
New City Press, 2007.

Next month:

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"Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68).