There are no translations available.

"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!"
(Lk 12:49)

In the Hebrew Scripture fire symbolizes the word of God pronounced by the prophet. But it also signifies the divine judgment that purifies his people by passing in their midst.

We can say the same about the word of Jesus: it builds up, but at the same time it destroys everything that has no consistency, everything that needs to come down, everything that is vanity, and it leaves only the truth standing.

John the Baptist had said of him: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Lk 3:16), preannouncing the Christian baptism inaugurated on the day of Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the appearance of the tongues of fire (See Acts 2:3).

This then is Jesus' mission: to cast fire on earth, to bring the Holy Spirit with his renewing and purifying force.

"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!"

Jesus gives us the Spirit. But how does the Holy Spirit act? He fills us with love and he wants us to keep this love burning in our hearts.

What kind of love is it? It's not an earthly, limited kind of love. It's the love of which the Gospel speaks. It's a universal love, like that of the heavenly Father who makes the sun rise and the rain fall on the good and the bad, including enemies (See Mt 5:45).

It's a love that doesn't wait for others to take the first step, but that always takes the initiative by

loving first.

It's a love that makes itself one with everyone: suffering and rejoicing with them, sharing their worries and hopes. And when needed, it does so tangibly, with deeds. So it's not simply a sentimental love expressed with words alone.

It's a love directed to Christ in our neighbor, mindful of his words: "You did it for me" (Mt 25:40).

It's a love that leads to reciprocity, to loving one another.

Because this love is a visible, concrete expression of our life based on the Gospel, it emphasizes and gives witness to the word — a witness we can and must offer in order to evangelize.

"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!"

Love is like fire — what is important is to keep it lit. And fire must always burn something. Above all, it must consume our selfishness, and it can do this because by loving, we are projected outside of ourselves: either toward God, by carrying out his will, or toward our neighbors, by helping them.

Even a small fire, if it is fed, can become a large blaze — that blaze of love, peace and universal brotherhood that Jesus brought on earth.

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

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This monthly leaflet is a supplement to Living City , the Focolare magazine (livingcitymagazine.com). People's life experiences as they put the monthly sentence into practice can be read in Living City or in books published by New City Press (newcitypress.com).

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Chiara Lubich, "Even our enemies," The Art of Loving , New City Press, 2010, p. 41.

Chiara Lubich, "Divine Diplomacy," Essential Writings, New City Press, 2007, p. 233.

Vincent Ryan Ruggiero, The Practice of Loving Kindness, New City Press, 2003.

Next Month:

June 2012

"Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you." (Jn.6:27)