There are no translations available.

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

After having fed the crowds through the multiplication of loaves and fishes near the Sea of Galilee, Jesus slipped away to the other side of the lake, to Capernaum, in order to escape the crowd that wanted to make him king. There were many who looked and still found him.

Jesus, however, did not accept their enthusiastic, yet self-seeking plans. They had eaten the miraculous bread, but had seen in that event only their personal, material gain. They did not recognize the deep significance of that bread, which revealed Jesus as sent by the Father in order to give true life to the world.

To them Jesus was only a wonder-worker, an earthly messiah who could give them food cheaply and in abundance. It is in this context that Jesus tells them:

"Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

"The food that endures" is the person of Jesus and also his teachings, since the teachings of Jesus and his person are one and the same.

If we read further, we see that this "food that endures" can also be identified with the Eucharistic body of Jesus. For this reason we can say that "the food that endures" is Jesus in person, who gives himself to us in his word and in the Eucharist.

"Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

The symbol of bread, and also of water, is often used in the Bible. Bread and water represent the primary and essential foods for human life. By applying the symbol of bread to himself, Jesus affirmed that he and teachings are indispensable to a person's life in the same way that bread is indispensable for physical life.

Bread as food is certainly necessary. Jesus even provided it miraculously for the crowds. By itself, however, it is not enough. The human person carries within himself or herself — perhaps without being fully aware of it — a hunger for truth, justice, goodness, love, purity, light, peace, joy; a hunger for the infinite, for the eternal, a hunger that nothing in the world can satisfy. Jesus offers himself as the one who alone can satisfy our inner hunger.

"Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

In presenting himself as the "bread of life," however, Jesus did not limit himself to affirming our need to nourish ourselves with him, in other words that we must believe in his words in order to have eternal life. He is urging us to experience him; he tells us to work for food that doesn't perish, thus extending a very compelling invitation. He is saying that we have to do all we can, utilize every possible resource in order to obtain this food. Jesus does not impose himself on us; rather he wants to be discovered, he wants to be experienced.

Certainly by our strength alone we are not able to reach Jesus. We can do it only by means of a gift from God. Nonetheless, Jesus continually invites us to leave ourselves open to the gift of himself that he wants to give. It is precisely by striving to put his word into practice that we reach the fullness of faith in him and can "taste his word" almost as we would taste a flavorful piece of bread.

"Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."

The Word of Life for this month is not emphasizing a particular aspect of Jesus' teaching such as forgiving offenses, being detached from wealth and so on. Instead, it is bringing us to the

very root of Christian life, that is, our personal relationship with Jesus.

I think that those who have begun to live the words of Jesus with commitment — above all his commandment of love of neighbor, the complete synthesis of God's words and of all his commandments — cannot help but notice, at least in some small way, that Jesus is the "bread" of their lives.

He is the one who fulfils every desire of their hearts, he is the source of their joy, of their light. By putting the word of God into practice, they have experienced it to be the true answer to the problems of humanity and of the world.

Then, if Jesus, the "bread of life," makes the supreme gift of himself in the Eucharist, it comes spontaneously for them to go and receive the Eucharist with love, and it occupies a very important place in their hearts.

Those of us who have had this stupendous experience cannot keep this discovery to ourselves, but rather — with the same concern with which Jesus urges us to obtain the "bread of life" — we should communicate it to others so that many may find in Jesus all that their hearts have been searching for. It would be an enormous act of love for our neighbors so that they too can know already here on earth what real life is.

They will then have the life that never dies. And what more could we possibly want?

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 August 1985.

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).

For information and to subscribe to this leaflet or to the magazine, write to: Living City, 202 Comforter Blvd, Hyde Park, New York 12538; tel: 845-229-0496; e-mail: livingcity@livingcitymagazine.com. Visit focolare.org (international); focolare.us (U.S.).

© 2012 by Living City of the Focolare Movement, Inc.

Read More:

Chiara Lubich, "Nourished on the Word," Essential Writings, New City Press, 2007, p. 120.

Chiara Lubich, "Loving Jesus in Everyone," The Art of Loving , New City Press, 2010, p. 89-98.

Leahy, Brendan. His Mass and Ours: Meditations on Living Eucharistically, New City Press, 2012.

Next month:

July 2012

"To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away." (Mt 13:12)