Written by Chiara Lubich
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"I am the resurrection and the life."
Jn 11:25

Jesus said these words after the death of Lazarus of Bethany; then Jesus brought Lazarus back to life four days after he had died. Lazarus had two sisters, Martha and Mary. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."
"Your brother will rise," Jesus answered.
She replied, "I know that he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day."
Then Jesus declared: "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (Jn 11:20-26).

"I am the resurrection and the life."

Jesus wants to make clear who he is. Jesus possesses the most precious thing anyone could want: life, the life that can never die. If we read John's Gospel we find that Jesus also said, "Just as the Father has life in himself, so he gave to his Son the possession of life in himself" (Jn 5:26). Since Jesus has life in himself, he can give it to others.

 "I am the resurrection and the life."

Martha believed in the final resurrection: "I know that he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day" (11:24). But with his wonderful affirmation, "I am the resurrection and the life," Jesus tells her that she does not have to wait for the future to hope in the resurrection of the dead. Right now, in the present moment, for all those who believe in him, he is already that divine, ineffable, eternal life that will never die. If Jesus is in those who believe, if he is in us, we will not die. This life in the believer is the same life that is in the risen Jesus and is, therefore, quite different from the human condition in which we find ourselves. And this extraordinary life, which already exists in us, will become fully manifest on the last day when, with our whole being, we will take part in the resurrection that is to come.

"I am the resurrection and the life."

With these words Jesus is certainly not denying that physical death exists; but that does not imply the loss of true life. Death will remain for us, as for everyone, an experience that is

unique, intense, perhaps feared. But death will no longer be a sign that our existence is pointless or absurd, the failure of our life, or our final end. Death, for us, will no longer be really a death.

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

When was this undying life born in us? At our baptism. There, even though, as human beings we were destined to die, we received immortal life from Christ. At our baptism, in fact, we received the Holy Spirit, the one who raised Jesus from the dead. The condition for receiving this sacrament was the faith we professed, perhaps through our godparents. On the occasion of the raising of Lazarus, Jesus stated clearly to Martha, “Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live … Do you believe this?” (Jn 11:25-26).

“Believing” is something very serious, very important. It does not mean simply accepting the truths Jesus has proclaimed; it means adhering to them with our whole being.

To have this life, therefore, we must say our “yes” to Christ. And this means adherence to his words, to his commands: living them. Jesus reinforced this: “Whoever keeps my word will never see death” (Jn 8:51). And the teachings of Jesus are summed up in love.

So we cannot but be happy: in us there is life!

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

During this period in which we prepare for the celebration of Easter, let's help one another take that decisive step, which we always have to renew, toward the death of our ego, so that from now on Christ, the Risen One, may live in us.

- Chiara Lubich

The Word of Life, a sentence of Scripture, is offered each month as a guide and inspiration for daily life. Its translation into 90 different languages and dialects reaches several million people worldwide, through print, radio, TV and the internet. From the Focolare Movement's beginnings, Chiara Lubich wrote her commentaries on the Word of Life, and after her death on March 14, 2008, her early writings are now being featured once again. This commentary was originally published in March 1999. If you would like to read experiences of life related to this or to past "Words of Life," they can be found in *Living City*, the Focolare monthly magazine *(livingcitymagazine.com)* or in books published by *New City Press (newcitypress.com)*.

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