“Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.”

(Jn 14:21)

Love is at the center of Jesus’ farewell discourse: the love of the Father for the Son, our love for Jesus, which means keeping his commandments.

Those who were listening to Jesus could easily recognize in his words an echo of Jewish wisdom literature such as, “Love of her [i.e., Wisdom] means the keeping of her laws” (Wis 6:18; see Prov 8:15-17; Sir 24:22-23) and, “She is readily perceived by those who love her” (Wis 6:12). In particular, revealing himself to those who love finds another parallel in Book of Wisdom 1:2, where it says that the Lord will manifest himself to those who believe in him.

The point of this Word of Life is: the Father loves those who love the Son, and the Son in turn loves them and reveals himself to them.

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Such a revelation of Jesus, however, requires love. We cannot conceive of Christians who do not have this dynamism, this driving force of love in their hearts. A clock doesn’t work, it doesn’t tell the time — we wouldn’t even call it a clock — if its batteries are dead. It’s the same with Christians. If they are not constantly striving to love, they don’t deserve the name of Christian.

The reason for this is that all of Jesus' commandments can be summed up in one: love of God and love of neighbor in whom we recognize and love Jesus.

Love is not just a matter of feelings. Love needs to be expressed in concrete terms, in serving our brothers and sisters, especially those who are near us, beginning with the little things, the most humble acts of service.

Charles de Foucauld once said: "When you love someone, you are really in that person through love, you live in that person through love, you no longer live in yourself, you are detached from yourself, outside of yourself."

When we love in this way, the light of Jesus makes its way into our hearts, just as he promised: "Whoever loves me … I will … reveal myself to him." Love is the source of light. By loving we have a greater understanding of God who is Love.

This leads us to love even more and to deepen our relationship with our neighbor.

This light, this loving knowledge of God is therefore the seal, the proof of true love. And we can experience it in different ways, because light takes on a particular color or shade in each one of us. But it also has some common characteristics. It helps us to understand the will of God, it gives us peace, serenity, and an ever-new understanding of the word of God. It is a heart-warming light that encourages us to walk along our way of life with growing confidence and determination. When the shadows of life make our way uncertain, when darkness threatens to stop us, these words of the Gospel will remind us that a light is turned on by loving and that even one small gesture of concrete love (a prayer, a smile, a word) will give us enough light to go forward.

Some bicycles have headlights that work as long as the riders keep peddling. If they stop, they find themselves in darkness, but when they start peddling again, the dynamo will provide the light one needs to see the way to go.

We can apply this to our lives: we only need to set love in motion again — our true love, a love that gives without expecting anything in return — in order to rekindle in us faith and hope.

- Chiara Lubich

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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 May 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
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