Written by Chiara Lubich
Friday, October 21, 2011 08:08

“Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour"
(Mt 25:13)

Jesus has just come out of the temple. The disciples proudly point out to him the grandeur and beauty of the building. He says to them in reply: “You see all these things, do you not? Amen, I say to you, there will not be left here a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down” (Mt 24:2). Then he goes up to the Mount of Olives, he sits down and, looking over Jerusalem, he begins to speak of the destruction of the city and the end of the world.

How will the end of the world come about? the disciples ask him — and when will it be? It’s a question that subsequent generations of Christians have continued to ask, a question that every human being asks. The future is indeed mysterious and it often frightens us. Even today people consult fortune tellers and look up their horoscopes to know what will happen in the future …

Jesus’ answer is very clear: the end of time coincides with his coming. The Lord of history will return, and he is the point of light in our future.

And when will this encounter take place? No one knows. It can come at any moment. Our life is in his hands. He gave it to us; he can take it back, even suddenly, without any warning. In any case, he warns us: you can be ready for this event if you stay awake, if you are vigilant.

“Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

In saying this, Jesus wants to remind us first of all that he will come. Our life on earth will end and a new life will begin, one that will never end. No one wants to talk about death today … At times, we do all we can to distract ourselves, immersing ourselves completely in our daily occupations to the point of forgetting who gave us life and who will ask to have it back in order to introduce us into the fullness of life, into communion with his Father in heaven.

Will we be ready to meet him? Will our lamps be lit, like those of the prudent virgins who were waiting for the spouse? In other words, will we be loving? Or will our lamps be extinguished because we are so taken up with the many things to do, the fleeting joys, the possession of material goods, that we forget the one thing necessary: to love?

“Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

But how can we stay awake? First of all, we know that whoever loves is capable of staying awake, of waiting. For example, a wife waits for her husband who is coming home from work late or returning from a long trip; a mother stays awake worrying about her son who hasn't come home yet; whoever is in love eagerly awaits the moment to see the one he or she loves … Whoever loves is capable of waiting even when the loved one delays.

We wait for Jesus if we love him and ardently desire to meet him.

And we wait for him by loving concretely, by serving him, for instance, in our neighbors or by working to build a more just society. Jesus himself invites us to live like this by giving us the parable of the faithful servant who, while waiting for the return of his master, looked after the servants and the affairs of the house. He also gave us the parable of the servants who, while waiting for their master to return home, put the talents they received to good use.

"Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

Precisely because we don't know the day or the hour of his coming, we can concentrate more easily on living one day at a time, focusing on the troubles of the day and on what Divine Providence offers to us right now.

Some time ago I spontaneously voiced this prayer to God:

Jesus,
let me speak always
as if it were the last word I ever say.
Let me act always
as if it were the last
thing I ever do.
Let me suffer always
as if it were the last
suffering I have to offer you.
Let me pray always
as if it were my last chance
on earth to talk with you.

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 November 2002.

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.).
© 2011 by Living City of the Focolare Movement, Inc.

Read more on this topic:

Chiara Lubich, Here and Now: Meditations on Living the Present, New City Press, 2005, newcitypress.com

Chiara Lubich, "Our Yes to God," in A Call to Love, Spiritual Writings, vol.1, New City Press, 1991

Msgr. Charles Quinn, "Where time and eternity merge," Living City, March 2011

Next month: December 2011"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths" (Lk 3:4).