"You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."
(Jn 15:3)

When the disciples heard Jesus speak these encouraging words with such decision, their hearts must have leapt for joy.

How wonderful it would be if Jesus could say these words to us as well! In order that we might be wor-thy of them in some small mea-sure, let us try to understand what they mean.

Jesus made this affirmation in the context of his well-known ex-ample of the vine and the bran-ches. He explained that he is the true vine, and the Father is the vinedresser who cuts off those branches that are barren and trims clean each branch that bears fruit so that it will yield even more.

Having said this, he declared:

"You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."

“You are already made clean.” What does Jesus mean with these words, what kind of purity is he speaking of? He is referring to the attitude one needs to have in order to stay in the presence of God; he means the absence of obstacles (such as sins) that come be-tween us and any contact with the sacred, any encounter with the di-vine.

To possess this purity, we need God’s help. In the Old Testament, people had already discovered that human beings are unable to approach God if they rely on human strength

alone. God must purify their hearts; he must give them a new heart. There is a beautiful Psalm that says, “A clean heart create in me, O God” (Ps 51:12).

"You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."

According to Jesus, there is a way to be pure of heart; it is his word. The disciples had heard and accepted his word, and it had purified them.

The words of Jesus, in fact, are not like human words. Jesus is present in them as he is present in the Eucharist, though in a differ-ent way. Through his words, Christ enters us, and by accepting them and putting them into practice, we allow him to be born and grow in our hearts.

Pope Paul VI said: “How does Jesus become present in souls? Through the communication of the word, the divine thought is conveyed; the Word, the Son of God made man, is conveyed. We could assert that the Lord be-comes incarnate in us when we al-low his word to come and dwell within us.”[1]

"You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."

The word of Jesus is also com-pared to a seed sown in the heart of the believer. When it is wel-comed, it penetrates deeply, and like a seed, it develops, grows and bears much fruit. It “Christifies” us, making us similar to Christ.

The word, which has thus en-tered a person’s life through the power of the Spirit, truly has the ability and strength to keep the Christian far from evil: that is, as long as we allow the word to act in us, we will be free from sin and, therefore, pure. We will sin only if we cease to obey the truth.

"You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."

How then should we live in or-der that we too might merit Jesus’ praise? We should try to put each word of God into practice, to nourish ourselves with the word moment by moment, making of our lives a work of continuous re-evangelization. We do this so that we might have the same thoughts and senti-ments as Jesus. We do this so that we might relive Christ in the world today and show to society, often enmeshed in evil and sin, the divine purity, the limpidness of spirit that the Gospel gives.

During this month then, if pos-sible (that is, if there are others with us who share the same desire), let us try in a special way to put into practice those words of Jesus that contain his commandment of mutual love.

In fact, in John’s Gospel, where we find this month’s Word of Life, there is a bond between the word of Jesus and the New Command-ment.

According to John, it is in the context of mutual love that the lived word has its effects of purification, holiness, preservation from sin, fruitfulness, closeness to God. An isolated individual cannot long resist the enticements of the world, whereas in mutual love, everyone finds the healthy environment that protects their authentic Christian life.

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 May 1982.

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, “Thoughts: To be re-evangelized,” *Essential Writings*. New City Press, 2006, p. 127.

Chiara Lubich, “‘Pruning’ Helps Love Grow,” *The Art of Loving* . New City Press, 2010, p. 76.

Fr. Pasquale Foresi, “The stages of spiritual life from the perspective of unity,” *New Humanity Review* , n.7

Next month:

May 2012

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

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[1] *From a talk to the parishioners of St. Eusebius in Rome (February 26, 1967)*