

# Word of Life Resources

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Workbook for Word of Life Meetings



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m o v e m e n t

Dear community leaders,

'**Serve**' is the word highlighted in this new Booklet; indeed, the Word of Life that recalls the episode in the life of Jesus when He tells His disciples: whoever wants to be great, let him be the servant of all, has been a lesson that He endorsed with His example at the Last Supper when He washed the feet of His disciples.

In an excerpt published in the space **IN DEPTH**, Chiara invites us to let the message of Jesus, who always speaks with authority, penetrate us. "Apostle is the one who serves others"; this is what the Pope said in an audience of which we publish an excerpt in **NEWS**. In this same space you can read an excerpt of what he said in Indonesia when he said: "Do not tire of dreaming and of continuing to build a civilization of peace", and in this, the laity - as the report on the Synodal Assembly also published in this section says - play a definitive role.

In the two experiences published at the end you will also find this touch of service: in the first, a young man tells how he was able to overcome a very deep pain he experienced with his brother, when he was able to accept him "in the human condition", and went "in search of the other to love him unconditionally". The second experience is that of a Word of Life group that has become "a bridge of communion among the other parish groups".

Committed with you to live like Jesus in serving "all", we greet you warmly and wish you a happy new month.

## To be re-evangelized

*When Jesus taught, he spoke with authority and what he says is a series of assertions made by Truth personified.*

*That is why it is good “to be re-evangelized,” assimilating his teachings one by one until they penetrate the depths of our souls and become almost the substance of our being, the new mindset of the “new self” in us.*

*And doing this is the deepest, most intimate, well-founded revolution needed today as always.<sup>139</sup>*

*Lord, we are aware that we have many shortcomings. But we have the joy of knowing with certainty that “being your living word” removes all the dross, so that we emerge anew moment by moment, like a nut from its shell. “Being your word” means being in another, acting as Another who lives in us, finding our freedom in freedom from ourselves, from our shortcomings, from our non-being.<sup>140</sup>*

*Have you noticed that if you fail to learn the alphabet and the basic rules of grammar in primary school, you remain illiterate all your life, unable to read or write despite having intelligence and will?*

*In the same way if we do not learn to assimilate one by one the words of life that Jesus has pronounced in the gospel, even though we are “good Christians,” we remain “gospel illiterates,” unable to write with our lives:Christ.<sup>141</sup>*

Essential Writings, © 2007 New City Press, New York and New City, London pp 127 - 128

**“Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.” (Mark 10:43-44).**

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem and for the third time he was trying to prepare his disciples for the dramatic event of his passion and death. However, the very men who had followed him most closely seem incapable of comprehending the reality of what he was saying.

In fact, conflict ensues among the apostles themselves: James and John ask to occupy places of honor “in his glory.” The other ten were indignant and angry, and the group is divided. Jesus patiently calls them all together, and once again explains that his message is one that turns everything upside down! He told them:

**“Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.”**

In this sentence from Mark’s Gospel, we notice that Jesus is gradually leading us from being a willing servant to a limited, secure group of people to becoming a “slave” to everyone, meaning being totally dedicated to all people without exception. It is a proposal that is definitely the opposite of the common mentality, which considers people in authority or in government to have power over others. This new concept of service captivated the apostles and is attractive to us as well.

Perhaps this is the secret of Christian love?

“One word in the Gospel that is not emphasized enough by us Christians is ‘serve.’ It might seem to be old fashioned, unworthy of the dignity of human beings who give, but also receive. And yet it is central to the Gospel, which is all about love. In fact, to love means to serve. Jesus did not come to command, but to serve. (...) To serve, to serve one another, is the heart of Christianity, and those who live it with simplicity - and everyone can do this - have done all that is necessary. And they do not remain alone, because since love is the essence of Christian life, it spreads like a blaze of fire.”

**“Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be**

**slave of all.”**

The encounter with Jesus in his Word opens our eyes, as it did for the blind man, Bartimaeus, whose story is found right after this Word of Life. Jesus frees us from our narrow vision and allows us to contemplate the horizons of God himself, of his plan for “new heavens and a new earth.”

Jesus washed the feet of others and by his example upended the often rigid practice in society, and even in religious environments, of relegating the task of physical service to a certain class of people. Christians, therefore, should imitate the example of Jesus, and learn from him a new style of life in society, which is to make ourselves a “neighbor” to each person we encounter, whatever their social or cultural condition may be.

As Giovanni Anziani, a Methodist pastor of the Waldensian Church, suggests, “[...] By agreeing to place our trust and our hope in the Lord, who is the servant of the many, the Word of God asks us to act in our world and in the midst of all its contradictions, as people who work for peace and justice, as bridge-builders who facilitate reconciliation among nations.”

This is also how Igino Giordani, author, journalist, politician and family man, lived in an historical moment in Italy marked by a dictatorship. To describe his experience, he wrote: “Politics is - in the most dignified Christian sense—a ‘servant’ and should not become a ‘master,’ nor should it abuse, dominate or dictate. Its function and dignity is to be of service to society, to be charity in act, to be the highest form of love for one’s homeland.”

Through the witness of his life, Jesus proposes to us a conscious and free choice. Rather than living withdrawn into ourselves and our own interests, we are asked to “live the life of the other,” feeling what they feel, carrying their burdens and sharing their joys.

We all have small or large responsibilities and spheres of authority. These may be in the field of politics or in other areas of society, such as in our families, schools or faith communities. Let’s take advantage of our “places of honor” to put ourselves at the service of the common good, creating just and compassionate human relationships with everyone.

Prepared by Letizia Magri and the Word of Life team

# Points to reflect on and Points for dialogue

## Points for reflection

- Conflict breaks out among the apostles themselves: James and John ask to occupy places of honor "in his glory" (cf. Mk 10:37), the others become indignant and complain, and the group splits up.
- Jesus, with patience, calls them all to himself and reveals to them once again the disturbing novelty of his announcement.
- Jesus did not come to command but to serve. [To serve, to serve one another is Christianity, and whoever does it with simplicity - and everyone can do it - has done it all; and not an all that remains there, but which, because it is living Christianity, spreads like wildfire "
- He, the Lord who washes feet (cf. Jn 13:14) contradicts by his example the rigidity of the tasks of service that our civil communities - and sometimes religious ones - reserve for socially fragile categories of people.
- Christian service is to imitate the example of Jesus, to learn from him a new style of "sociality": to become a neighbor to every person, in every human, social or cultural condition and to the very end.
- We all have small or big responsibilities and spaces of authority: in the political and social field, but also in the family, in our studies, in the community of faith. Let us take advantage of our "places of honor" to put ourselves at the service of the common good, building just and supportive human relationships.

## Points for dialogue during the meeting

- What does the Word of Life chosen for this month say?
- On the way to where..., whom Jesus prepares for the third time for the dramatic event of his passion and death and who show themselves unable to understand?
- What is in this sentence from Mark's Gospel and what is Jesus leading us to?
- What is the word in the Gospel that we Christians do not emphasize enough? Does it seem to us outdated and unbecoming of the dignity of man, who gives and who receives? Can you tell us, for you, what will be the secret of this Christian love?
- The encounter with Jesus in his Word that opens us, to whom did it happen in the following verses, that frees us and makes us contemplate?
- What does Giovanni Anziani, Methodist pastor of the Waldensian Church, suggest in this Word of Life?
- Would you like to tell us about the life of Igino Giordani according to what this Word of Life says or something else you have known about him?
- What does Jesus propose with the testimony of his life?

## **Pope at Mass in Indonesia: Dare to dream of fraternity!**

*On the third day of his Apostolic Journey to Indonesia, Pope Francis celebrates Mass in Jakarta, and reminds the faithful of the need to listen to and live the Word proclaimed by Jesus.*

**By Christopher Wells**

“Listening to the Word and living the Word” are “two fundamental attitudes that enable us to become Jesus’ disciples,” Pope Francis said on Thursday, at the Holy Mass, the final public event of his Apostolic Visit to Indonesia.

Reflecting on the Gospel reading for the feast of St. Teresa of Calcutta, the Holy Father noted that “the human heart is always searching for a truth that can feed its desire for happiness.” That truth, he said, cannot be found in merely human words, but only in the Word of God, “the only true compass for our journey, which alone is capable of leading us back to the true meaning of life amid so much woundedness and confusion.”

### **Allow yourself to be challenged by the Word**

Pope Francis reminded the faithful that our first task as disciples is to listen to the Word of God, as Peter did when Jesus began to preach from his fishing boat. “Our life of faith begins,” the Pope said, “when we humbly welcome Jesus into the boat of our lives, make room for Him, listen to His Word, and allow ourselves to be questioned, challenged, and changed by it.”

At the same time, the Pope continued, we are called not only to listen to Jesus’ Word, but to live it. Peter trusted the Lord when He called him to “put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch,” and we, too, are called to trust in Jesus by “courageously casting the nets of the Gospel into the sea of the world.”

Recognizing that we can always find excuses to refuse the call, Pope Francis invited the faithful to embrace the humility and faith of Peter, who obeyed the Lord’s call even after a night of failure and disappointment. He recalled the words of St Teresa, who used to say, “When we have nothing to give, let us give that nothing. And even if you reap nothing, never tire of sowing.”

### **Dreaming and building a civilization of peace**

“Brothers and sisters,” Pope Francis concluded, “I would also like to say to you, to this nation, to this wonderful and varied archipelago, do not grow weary of setting sail and casting your nets, do not grow weary of dreaming and building again a civilization of peace!”

*“Always dare to dream of fraternity!”*



“Always dare to dream of fraternity!” he continued, encouraging them “to sow seeds of love, confidently tread the path of dialogue, continue to show your goodness and kindness with your characteristic smile.”

## ***MASS IN Indonesia HOMILY OF Pope Francis***

*Friday, September 5 2024*

Originally published here: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2024-09/pope-to-indonesian-faithful-always-dare-to-dream-of-fraternity.html>  
[vi/en/homilies/1970/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_hom\\_19701127.html](https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2024-09/pope-to-indonesian-faithful-always-dare-to-dream-of-fraternity.html)

Video can be found here: <https://youtu.be/0bIUszoON2g>

## **Second Synodal Assembly**

From the 2nd to the 27th of October, the second session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod will be held at the Vatican, to deal with the theme 'For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission'. It will be the final point of a long process that began in 2021 at the convocation of Pope Francis.

This second session is the continuation of the first Synodal Assembly, which took place from October 4 to 29, 2023. There, after almost a month of joint reflection, “spiritual conversation,” discernment and deliberation, the synodal fathers and mothers - for the first time in the history of Synods, women and lay people have participated with voice and vote in this meeting - drafted, voted, approved and

published a Synthesis Document to guide the way to the next meeting. Synodality, “walking together”, is a fundamental point for Francis, who has often expressed the importance of the Church as a whole (Pope, bishops, priests, religious and laity) moving forward together and hand in hand: “The path of synodality is the path that God expects of the Church of the third millennium. I am convinced that, in a synodal Church, the exercise of the Petrine primacy will also be able to receive greater light”.

# Experiences

## A divine alchemy: pain turned into love



### ***Michelangelo's "Vatican" Pietà***

Imagine, a typical 17 year old young man who likes sports, video games, who, like some, has problems in school with his classes. Who dreams of marrying Daniela, having children and buying a house... and out of nowhere, life goes out. This is the story of my younger brother who, in his darkest moment, decided to take his own life. As for many, the year 2020 is summarized in a cruel pandemic and the coexistence between families becomes 24 hours. In that time my brother starts to show strange attitudes, he becomes more distant, he did not like to leave his room, my parents tried to talk to him and, at times, even force him to be with us. At a certain point he tells us that he no longer believes in God. My mom tries once again to approach him, but he seems to be sealed by an airtight bubble. I began to feel an invisible wall rising higher and higher between us.

After the pandemic, face-to-face classes return. He started going to school and got back in touch with his friends. Seeing him go back to school was a bit liberating because he was able to open up and have fun with his friends. He told me how he had been elected to be the class president, that there were two girls he liked and, later on, he told me that he became the boyfriend of one of the girls.

# Experiences

May 22, 2022 arrived. As we do every Sunday, we go to mass. Seeing that my brother was going to be alone, I told him that I would stay with him, but he told me to go quietly.

I hesitate for a moment, but finally decide to go, but not before making a casual joke and saying goodbye with a laugh. It was the last time I saw him alive. After mass, my parents try to call him, but there is no answer. There is a tension in the car, my dad accelerates. We arrive home, my mom goes straight to my brother's room, we hear a scream that tears the sky. I get to my brother's room. We rescue him still hoping to get him to the hospital and save him. I dare to touch his arm, looking for human warmth, the warmth of life, it no longer exists. I left the house in the midst of uncontrollable crying. Much later, I managed to accept that moment as part of God's will, where I needed to give a radical yes in a situation of pain.

After about 6 months, I felt that I had a strong experience of encountering the face of Jesus in his abandonment and that I needed to do something more: to go to meet people who were suffering. I wanted to be able to see that face of Jesus Abandoned in the eyes and give meaning to the pain. This led me to the Fazenda da Esperança, a therapeutic community that has been working since 1983, in the process of recovery of people seeking to free themselves from their vices, mainly alcohol and drugs. It is inspired by the spirituality of unity of the Focolare Movement. At the Fazenda I had the opportunity to meet people who were suffering more than me and also others who had already had experiences with suicide. I was able to look them in the eye, listen to them, cry with them and, in a spiritual way, meet my brother again. I was able to get to know him better, to understand a little more the pain and agony behind people who, in a moment of suffering, decide to take their own lives.

I must admit that during most of this experience I could not find an answer to my question: Is God really Love? Because if He was, I did not understand why He allowed so much pain in my life and in the lives of those who came to the Fazenda.

Now, with great certainty, I can say yes. I learned that when pain is accepted in the human condition and one goes in search of the other to love him unconditionally, one lives a divine alchemy of pain turned into love, from a dead Jesus to One who resurrects.

J.S.

# Experiences

## A bridge of unity and harmony

*We are a parish group in Quindío (Colombia) that lives the Word of Life.*

Two years ago, the parish priest called a meeting of families where about 10 couples joined us. Thus began our group of families. One of them had recently lost their son, Rodrigo, who was 13 years old. When we started the meetings, the father was very serious and quiet. It seemed that he was there only to accompany his wife.

As the meetings went on, he became more serene. Once he had managed to express the pain he and his wife felt at the loss of their son. It was an important moment for him to share with everyone his encounter with pain, with Jesus on the cross. Each time this father participated more actively, and the shared experience of pain has strengthened the unity among all. The Word lived among all, moves hearts. A couple attending our meetings expressed the desire to receive the sacrament of marriage, because they had been living together as a couple for some time and, through our experiences, they discovered the value of this sacrament.

The parish community, knowing their beautiful intentions, supported them in this purpose: some offered the wedding cake, others got the place for the party and others, on the other hand, donated some plates of food. This wedding was celebrated with much joy and participation by the parish community.

Although we are one of the smallest groups in the parish, the pastor has confidence in us and this fills us with joy. He says that, where we are, we are a bridge between the other parish groups and we bring harmony among all. And activities like this are successful.

N. D. - Colombia