

February 2025

Test everything but hold on to what is good. (1Thess 5:21)

This month's Word of Life is taken from a series of final recommendations that the Apostle Paul makes to the community of the Thessalonians: 'Do not quench the Spirit, do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good. Abstain from every kind of evil.'ⁱ

Prophecy, discernment, dialogue and listening. These were Paul's instructions to the community that had recently embarked on a journey of faith.

Among the various gifts of the Spirit, Paul highly esteemed that of prophecy.ⁱⁱ A prophet is not someone who foresees the future but rather a person who has the gift of seeing and understanding personal and collective history from God's perspective.

However, all gifts are guided by the greatest gift of all and that is charity and fraternal love.ⁱⁱⁱ Augustine of Hippo states that only charity enables us to discern the attitude we should take in the face of a range of different situations.^{iv}

Test everything but hold on to what is good.

We should consider not only the personal gifts we may have, but also bear in mind the potential and variety of views and opinions offered to us by the people around us or with whom we work or even meet by chance. It is important to always maintain a sense of honesty and to be aware of the limitations of our own point of view.

This word of life could be a motto to adopt in every situation of dialogue and even opposing views. Our hearts and minds are broadened when we listen to other people: although we may not accept everything they say, we may find something good in their ideas. When love impels us to create a space within ourselves in order to listen to other people, we have the possibility of building something together.

Test everything but hold on to what is good.

Cardinal elect Timothy Radcliffe, one of the theologians present at the Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church, said that ‘the bravest thing we can do at this synod is to be honest with each other about our doubts and questions, those for which we have no clear answers. Then we will approach each other as fellow seekers, as beggars searching for the truth.’^v

In a conversation with members of the Focolare, Margaret Karram commented on this reflection: ‘Thinking about it, I realised that many times I did not have the courage to really say what I thought: perhaps because I was afraid of not being understood or because I didn’t want to be different from the majority. I realised that being “beggars of truth” means having that attitude of closeness towards one another, in which we all want what God wants, and where together, we all seek what is good.’^{vi}

Test everything but hold on to what is good.

‘Test everything but hold on to what is good’. This is Antía’s, experience. She is a member of “Mosaico”, a performing arts group that began in Spain in 2017. It is a local project that has developed from the Gen Rosso music group. It is composed of young Spaniards who use their art and workshops to offer their experience of fraternity to others. Antía tells us: ‘It connects with my values - a fraternal world, in which everyone (very young, inexperienced, vulnerable...) gives their contribution to the project. “Mosaico” makes me believe that a more united world is not a utopia, despite the difficulties and hard work involved. I grew up working in a team where dialogue was too honest at times and I often gave up on my own ideas which I believed to be the best. I see that in this project “good” is built piece by piece together, by us all.’^{vii}

Edited by Patricia Mazzola & the Word of Life Team

iThess. 5:19-22
iiPope John Paul II, General Audience, 24.6.1992
iiiCf. 1Cor. 13
ivAugustine of Hippo Ep. Jo. 7,8
vCardinal elect Timothy Radcliffe, Synod of RC Church, 2.10.2023
viMargaret Karram in conversation with focolarini, 3.02.2024
viiMosaic GRLP