

Do you believe this? (Jn 11:26)

Jesus was travelling to Bethany, the town where Lazarus had died four days earlier. When Martha, Lazarus' sister, heard that Jesus was on his way, she was filled with hope and ran to meet him. John's gospel indicates that Jesus loved her, Lazarus and their sister, Mary, very much.¹ Although Martha was sorrowful, she showed her great trust in the Lord and was convinced that had he been present, her brother would not have died but, nevertheless, any request she made to God would be granted.

Jesus affirmed, 'Your brother will rise again.' (Jn 11:23)

Do you believe this?

After clarifying that he was referring to Lazarus' return to physical life there and then and not to the life that awaits the believer after death, Jesus asked Martha if she had complete faith. Not only was he about to perform one of his miracles - which the evangelist John calls 'signs' - but he wanted to give resurrection and new life to her and all believers.

Jesus proclaimed, 'I am the resurrection and the life' (Jn 11:25) and the faith he asked of Martha lay in a personal relationship with him and active and dynamic adherence. Believing is not like accepting a contract that you sign once and then never look at again, but it is something that transforms and permeates your daily life.

Do you believe this?

Jesus invites us to live a new life here and now. He invites us to experience it every day, knowing that, just as we rediscovered at Christmas, he himself brought this life to us by first seeking for us and coming to dwell among us.

How do we answer his question? Let us look to Lazarus' sister, Martha.

In dialogue with Jesus, she made a full profession of faith. The original text in Greek expresses this with great force. The 'I believe' that she pronounced means 'I have come to believe', 'I firmly believe' that 'you are the Christ, the Son of God who is to come into the world' ⁱⁱ, with all the consequences that this brings. It is a conviction that has matured over time and has been tested by the different events she faced during her life.

The Lord also addresses this question to us. He asks us to trust firmly in him and adhere to his way of life, founded on generous and practical love for all.

Our faith will mature through perseverance, and it will grow stronger, as each day we see the truth of Jesus' words when put into practice. Furthermore, this will make a positive impact upon our daily actions towards others. In the meantime, we can make our own the prayer that the apostles made to Jesus: 'Increase our faith' (*Lk 17:6*).

Do you believe this?

Patricia, from South America said, 'One of my daughters had lost her job because the government had closed the public agency where she worked. The same thing had happened to her colleagues. As a form of protest, they had set up an encampment in front of the office. I tried to help them by participating in some of their activities, bringing them food or simply stopping to talk to them.

On Maundy Thursday, a group of priests who were supporting them in their plight decided to hold a ceremony during which there was space to listen, a reading from the Gospel and the act of washing feet was performed, in memory of what Jesus did before his crucifixion. The majority of those present were not religious people. Nevertheless, it was a moment of deep union, fraternity and hope. They felt warmly welcomed and were moved, as they thanked those priests who accompanied them in their uncertainty and suffering.'

This word of Jesus has been chosen as the guide for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025. Let us pray and work so that our common belief may be the driving force in the search for fraternity with all: this is God's proposal and desire for all humanity, but it requires us to play our part too. Prayer and action will be effective if they arise from this trust in God and we live accordingly.

Edited by Silvano Malini and the Word of Life Team.

iJn 11:5

iiCf. Jn 11:27