

(Transcription)

August 2012¹

Word of Life

“Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others I will deny before my heavenly Father.” (Mt 10:32–33)

This word of life is a source of great joy and encouragement to all Christians. With this passage, Jesus calls us to be consistent in living out our faith in him, because our eternal destiny depends on the attitude we have assumed toward him during our lifetime. If we declare ourselves for him before others, he says, he will have reason to declare himself for us before his Father. If instead we have disowned him before others, he will disown us before his Father.

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Jesus reminds us of the reward or the punishment that awaits us after this life because he loves us. He knows, as one Father of the Church put it, that at times fear of punishment is more effective than a beautiful promise. For this reason he increases in us the hope of endless happiness while at the same time, in order to save us, he awakens in us a fear of being condemned.

His aim is that we may live forever with God. This is all that matters. It is the goal for which we have been called into existence. Only with him, in fact, will we reach our complete self-fulfilment, the full realization of all our aspirations. This is why Jesus urges us to “acknowledge” him here and now. If instead we choose not to have anything to do with Jesus, if we disown him now, when we reach the next life we will find ourselves cut off from him forever.

At the end of our lives Jesus will therefore simply confirm before the Father the choice that each one of us has made while here on earth — with all its consequences. By referring to the final judgment, he emphasizes the tremendous importance and seriousness of the decision we make here. Our eternity is at stake.

“Whoever acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven. Whoever denies me before others I will deny before my Father in heaven.”

How can we best take advantage of this warning Jesus has given us? How can we live his Word? He himself said it: “Everyone who acknowledges me...”

Let us decide to declare ourselves for him before others with simplicity and openness, overcoming our need for mere human respect. Let’s get out of a state of mediocrity and compromise that empties our lives, also as Christians.

Remember that we have been called to bear witness to Christ: through us he wants to reach all people with his message of peace, justice and love.

We can bear witness to him wherever we are, whether in our family, at work, among friends, at school or in the many different circumstances of our lives. We can do it first of all through our behavior,

¹ Taken from the Word of Life, July 1984.

through the integrity of our lives, through our purity, through our detachment from money, through our participation in the joys and sufferings of others.

We can express it through our mutual love, our unity, so that the peace and joy promised by Jesus to those united to him will fill our soul even now and overflow onto others.

Perhaps someone will ask us why we act the way we do, why we are so serene in a world that is so fraught with tension. We will then answer with humility and sincerity using those words that the Holy Spirit will suggest to us. In this way we will bear witness to Christ with our words, too, on the level of ideas.

Then perhaps many of those who are searching for him will find him.

At other times we may be misunderstood, contradicted, made the object of derision, hatred and persecution. Jesus alerted us to this possibility: "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (Jn. 15:20).

We are still on the right path, however, so let's go ahead to bear witness to him with courage even in the midst of trials, even at the cost of our lives. The reward that awaits us is well worth it; it is heaven, where Jesus whom we love will declare himself for us in front of his Father for all eternity.

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