

Rome, April 25, 1990¹**WORD OF LIFE**

«**But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval.**» (1 Pt 2:20).

The apostle Peter is showing his communities the true spirit of the Gospel in its practical applications. In particular he refers to each person's circumstances and position in life.

Here he is speaking to slaves who had converted to the faith and who, like all slaves in society at that period, were sometimes subject to totally unjust ill-treatment and lack of understanding. These words also extend to all those in any time and place who find they must endure a lack of understanding and injustice at the hands of their neighbours, whether superiors or equals.

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Peter advises them not to give in to the instinctive reactions that such situations provoke, but to do what Jesus would do. He urges them to respond with love and to see such difficulties and lack of understanding as a grace, that is, something God allows so they can demonstrate the true Christian spirit. Besides, like this with their love they will be able to bring to Christ even those who do not understand them.

«**But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval.**»

Some people use this sentence and others like it to accuse Christianity of encouraging excessive submissiveness, dulling people's consciences and making them less active in the struggle against injustice.

But this is not so. If Jesus asks us to love those who do not understand or who treat us badly, it is not because he wants to make us insensitive to injustice. Far from it! It is because he wants to teach us how to build a truly just society. This can be done by spreading the spirit of true love, beginning ourselves to be the first to love.

But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval.

How should we live the Word of Life this month?

There are many ways today in which we too can be misunderstood or treated badly. They range from a lack of tact and rudeness to malicious judgements, ingratitude, offensive behaviour and real injustices.

We can say this: even on all these occasions we have to give witness to the love that Jesus brought to earth for everyone and so, also, for those who treat us badly.

The Word of Life this month wants to tell us that, even in the legitimate defence of justice and truth, we ought never to forget that our first duty, as Christians, is to love others. We have to treat them with that new attitude, made of understanding, acceptance and mercy, which Jesus had for us. In this way, even when we defend our ideas, we will never break relationships, never give in to the temptation to resent others or to take revenge on them.

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Acting like this, as instruments of Jesus' love, we too will be able to bring our neighbours to God.

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