

Word of Life January 2016

The huge multitude of Christians should be quite visible. But they are so divided that many people don't notice them and so don't see Jesus through them. Unity is the only sure way to proclaim God's mighty acts.

'Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord' (see 1 Pet. 2:9).

When the Lord acts, he does mighty things. As soon as he had created the universe he saw it was 'good' (Gen1:25). Indeed, after creating the man and the woman, and entrusting the whole of creation to them, he saw it was 'very good' (Gen 1:31). But the act of God that exceeds all else was done by Jesus. In his death and resurrection he created a new world and a new people. It is a people to whom Jesus has given the life of Heaven, a genuine fraternity, in mutual welcome, in sharing with one another and in self-giving. Peter's letter helped the first Christians realize that God's love had made them 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (1 Pet. 2:9; see also the whole passage vv. 9-10).

If, like the first Christians, we were to become fully aware of what we are, of how much God's mercy has done in us, among us and around us, we would be amazed. We would not be able to contain our joy and we would feel the need to share it with others, 'to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord.'

But it is difficult, or virtually impossible, to give witness effectively to the beauty of the new kind of relations in society that Jesus brought about, if we stay isolated from one another. It is normal, therefore, that Peter's invitation is addressed to the whole people. We cannot show ourselves as argumentative and partisan, or even merely indifferent to one another, and then proclaim that 'the Lord has created a new people, and has freed us from egoism, from hatred and rancour, giving us mutual love as the law that makes us one heart and one soul...' Among the Christian people there are indeed differences in our ways of thinking, our traditions and cultures, but these diversities are to be welcomed with respect, recognizing the beauty of this huge variety and aware that unity is not uniformity.

This is the journey we will follow during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (celebrated in the northern hemisphere on 18-25 January) and throughout the year. The Word of Life invites us among our different Churches and communities to try to get to know one another better, to tell one another of the marvellous works of the Lord. In this way we will be able to 'proclaim' these works credibly, giving witness that we are one precisely in our diversity and that we support each another concretely.

Chiara Lubich encouraged us with great energy to follow this path:

Love is the greatest power on earth: it unleashes the peaceful Christian revolution around those who live it, so that today people can repeat what the early Christians said centuries ago: 'We were born only yesterday and we have already spread all over the world.'¹ ...

Love! What a great need there is for love in the world! And in us, Christians!

All together we Christians of various Churches number more than a billion people. Such a multitude should be quite visible. But we are so divided that many do not see us, nor do they see Jesus through us.

¹ Tertullian, *The Apology*, 37:7

He said that the world would recognize us as his own and, through us, would recognize him, by our mutual love, by unity: 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (Jn 13:35)...

Our world today asks each one of us for love; it asks for unity, communion, solidarity.

And it also calls upon the Churches to recompose the unity that has been torn for centuries.²

Edited by Fabio Ciardi

² Chiara Lubich, *Living Dialogue* (London: New City, 2009),41-3.