

Word of Life May 2016

He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them (Rev. 21:3)

God has always wanted this: to dwell with us, his people. Already the first pages of the Bible show it as God comes down from heaven, walks in the garden and talks with Adam and Eve. Didn't he create us for this? What does a lover want if not to be with the beloved? The Book of Revelation, which investigates God's plan in history, gives us the certainty that God's desire will be fully fulfilled.

With the coming of Jesus, Emmanuel, 'God with us', he already started living in our midst. And now that Jesus is risen his presence is no longer limited to one place or one time, and he has spread it to the entire world. With Jesus has begun the building of a new and highly original community, a people made up of many peoples. God does not wish to dwell only in my soul, in my family, in my people, but among all peoples called to form one people. At the same time, the current experience of human mobility is changing the idea of what it is to be a people. In many nations, the people are made up of many ethnic groups.

We are so different from one another in the colour of our skin, our culture, our religion. We often look at one another with distrust, suspicion or fear. We make war upon each other. And yet God is Father of all, and loves all and each of us. He does not want to live with one people ('Ours, of course,' would be our first thought) and leave the others behind. For him we are all his sons and daughters, a single family.

Let's make the effort, therefore, guided by the Word of Life this month, to appreciate diversity, respect the other, look at him or her as someone who belongs to me: I am the other, the other is me; the other lives in me, I live in the other. And let's begin with those we share our life with every day. Like this we can make space for the presence of God among us. It will be he who constructs unity, who safeguards the identity of each people, who creates a new way of being society.

In 1959 Chiara Lubich had already had this insight. She wrote a passage that is extremely up-to-date and an amazing prophecy:

'If one day all people, not as individuals but as nations, would learn to put themselves aside ... and if they would do this as the expression of the mutual love between states that God asks for, just as he asks for mutual love among individuals, that day would mark the beginning of a new era. For on that day....Jesus will be alive and present among peoples ...

'Now is the time for every people to go beyond its own borders, to look farther. Now is the time to love the other countries as our own, to acquire a new purity of vision. To be Christians it is not enough to be detached from ourselves. The times we live in demand from the followers of Christ something more: the awareness of Christianity's social dimension....

'And we hope that the Lord may have mercy on this divided and confused world, on peoples closed within their shells contemplating their own beauty – the only beauty that exists for them (though it is both limiting and unsatisfying). They strain to hold on to their treasures against all odds, the very treasures that could help other peoples who are dying of hunger. May the Lord cause all barriers to fall, and allow love to run uninterrupted through all lands, flooding them with spiritual and material goods.

'Let us hope that the Lord brings about a new order in the world. Only he can make humanity a family and cultivate the unique characteristics of each people so that the splendour of

each, placed at the service of others, may shine with the one light of life. This light of life in making beautiful each earthly country will make it the antechamber of the Eternal Country.¹

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¹ Chiara Lubich, *Essential Writings* (New York and London, 2006), 231-2.