

One Christian People

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On 17 January 1998, on the eve of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Chiara Lubich gave a speech in the Palermo Cathedral entitled, 'A Spirituality for Dialogues'. Below are two key excerpts relevant to the ongoing ecumenical journey.

... Thus, we need love and mutual love between Christians, and mutual love between the Churches. The love that leads people to put everything in common, each Church to be a gift for the others, so that we can foresee in the Church of the future that there will be just one truth, expressed in different ways, seen from different viewpoints, made more beautiful by the variety of interpretations.

In his book *"Crossing the Threshold of Hope"*, Pope John Paul II wrote, "It is necessary for humanity to achieve unity through plurality, to learn how to come together in the one Church, even while presenting a plurality of ways of thinking and acting, of cultures and civilizations." (p. 167)

It is not that one Church or another will have to "die" (as is sometimes feared), but each Church should be reborn as new in unity. Living in this Church in full communion will be something marvelous, as fascinating as a miracle, which will attract the attention and interest of the whole world.

Mutual love, however, is truly evangelical, and therefore valid, only if it is practiced in the measure wanted by Jesus: He said: "Love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends" (see Jn 15:12-13).
[...]

An ecumenical spirituality lived in this way can produce exceptional fruits.

But we can foresee that it will have one effect above all. Since it is communitarian, it will bind into one all those who live it, so that there will be solidarity amongst them and they will be, in a certain way, already one. They will realize that they form, so to speak, one Christian people, and that together with all that is being done in so many other ways through the action of the Holy Spirit in this ecumenical age, they can be a leaven helping to bring full communion among Churches.

In fact it will be the living out of a fourth ecumenical dialogue, in addition to the dialogues of charity and of prayer and the theology. It will be the dialogue of the people. Not a people formed only of laity, of course, but the whole people of God. It is a dialogue which will enable us to discover more clearly, and more effectively, the rich heritage already shared by Christians, including Baptism, Sacred Scripture, the first Councils, the Fathers of the Church, etc.

We are eager to see *this* people. Already here and there it can be glimpsed, and we long to see this people in every Church.