

Religions Partnering Towards Peace

Chiara Lubich

We know from experience that whoever wants to move mountains of hate and violence in today's world faces an enormous, weighty task. But what is beyond the strength of millions of isolated individuals, becomes possible for those who put into practice mutual love, reciprocal understanding and unity as the fundamental goals of their lives.

This way of life has a key, a secret, a name, a purpose. When we enter into dialogue with people of various religions like today, that is, when we are open to others in a dialogue of human kindness, reciprocal esteem, respect and mercy, we are also opening ourselves to God. In the words of Pope John Paul II, "we let God be present in our midst."¹

This is the wonderful effect of our mutual love and the secret force that gives vigor and success to our efforts to bring unity and universal brotherhood everywhere. It is what the Gospel announces to Christians when it says that if two or more are united in genuine love, Christ himself is present among them and, therefore, in each one of them. And what greater guarantee can we have than this presence of God? What greater opportunity can there be for those who want to be instruments of brotherhood and peace?

This life of mutual love and unity gives great joy to those who practice it. However, it calls for commitment, daily practice and sacrifice. And this is where one particular word in the language of Christians shines forth in all its brilliance and power. It's one that the world does not want to hear, a word it considers foolish, absurd, futile.

This word is the *cross*.

Nothing good, nothing useful, nothing fruitful for the world can be achieved without meeting and accepting weariness and suffering, in a word, without the cross. Committing oneself to live mutual love always, so as to bring peace and promote fraternity is not something to be taken lightly! It calls for courage, for knowing how to suffer [...]

Our work with many brothers and sisters of the major religions, and the fraternity experienced with them, has convinced us that the reality of religious pluralism can shed its connotation of division and conflict. For millions of men and women, what can emerge is the challenge of recomposing the unity of the human family so that the Holy Spirit may in some way be present and active in all religions, not only in individual members but also in the inner workings of each religious tradition [...]

Let us fill our hearts then with authentic love. With it, we can hope for all things, for unity among the faithful of the major religions, and for brother and sisterhood lived by all humanity. May God embrace us all with His love.

¹ John Paul II, *Address to the Meeting with Representatives of Non-Christian Religions in the Rajaji Hall of Madras, Calcutta, India*, 5 February 1986.