

Life-giving Listening

Chiara Lubich

*"A synodal Church is a Church of listening," Pope Francis reiterated several times. Already in *Evangelii gaudium* he noted, "We need to practice the art of listening, which is more than hearing" (No. 171).*

We need this "listening of the heart," in order to truly encounter the other person and be surprised together by God's ever-new thoughts and plans. The excerpt below is from an address by the author to a group of bishops of various Churches, in Istanbul on Oct. 9, 1984.

One cannot "make oneself one" with others nor able to enter their soul to understand or share another's pain, if our spirit is rich with worries, judgements, or anything else. "Becoming one" requires spirits that are poor, people poor in spirit. Only with people like this is unity possible. And to whom, then, does one look to learn this great art of being poor in spirit, an art that brings with it - as the Gospel affirms -- the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of love, love in the soul? One looks to Jesus forsaken. No one is poorer than he. After losing almost all his disciples, after giving his mother, he gives his life for us as well and experiences the terrible sensation that even the Father abandons him.

Looking at Jesus, we understand how everything must be given or postponed for the sake of one's neighbor: the things of the earth and even - if necessary - in some way also the things of Heaven. Looking at Him who felt abandoned by God, all renunciation is possible. For instance, love for a brother or sister can require leaving 'God for God' in a moment of prayer, to 'make ourselves one' with that person who is in need; to be completely empty of ourselves to welcome another's pain.

"Making oneself one" involves *this* renunciation.

This text and others can be found in the recent Italian book entitled, 'Closeness, God's Style in the Life and Thought of Chiara Lubich,' edited by J. Povilus and L. Ciccarelli, Città Nuova (Rome), 2024, pgs. 124-125.