

(English translation)

Rome, 10 March 1976¹

The Joy of Discovering we are Brothers and Sisters

You have had contacts with many non-Catholic Christians. How do you see them now as compared to before?

When a bottle is three quarters full, you can have two different reactions. You can say, "Oh, a quarter is still missing," or you can say, "It is already three-quarters full!"

The first expression describes how I used to view my non-Catholic brothers and sisters about 15 years ago, before I began to work for ecumenism with the whole Focolare Movement. The second reaction is one which I have had in my heart during these last years.

In fact, I cannot thank God enough for having put me in touch with Christians of the most varied and important denominations.

They willingly established with us a relationship of mutual charity in Christ. So living and working with them and, above all, getting to know them better, has given me a great sense of awe and gratitude towards God's Providence, which has watched over the many riches of faith, of hope, of other liturgies, of the value of God's word within these Churches or ecclesial communities.

In my contacts with them, my heart has been hugely enlarged.

I have truly "felt" that we are not simply a family of 690 million who are brothers and sisters because they are "Catholics" (according to statistics, which don't allow for the crises that many people face), but we are a family of almost a billion, because we are all "Christians" ... even though there are still things lacking (sometimes very, very few things!) for the full unification of the various Churches.

We are all brothers and sisters who love Christ, who try to love him. This common denominator is already a great deal.

Pope Paul VI, in speaking to a group of Lutherans, said that all together we belong to the Church, even if not all belong to the Catholic unity.

The division of Christians into many hundreds of denominations could take your breath away, above all when we consider the problem of reunification. Yet, whoever is immersed in working with these brothers and sisters and loves them, experiences a particular joy. And these are not just words. It is the joy, I believe, of discovering that we are all brothers and sisters because Christ is in each one of us.

This urges us to go right to the end, to put in common "all" the spiritual goods we possess. We have seen that these goods circulate, that love works miracles, and raises up people in all the Churches who are committed to unity. They work within their own Church, loving, enlightening and giving, in order to reach the goal: to be one Church.

¹ See *Living City* Vol.16 No.3, May-June 1977, p. 21.