

17 April 1978

The fraternity which makes us Church

From Claudio Sorge's interview with Chiara Lubich for the "Eighth Day" TV programme broadcast on Rai Uno.

Christian love – and here lies the fathomless mystery and hidden power which, when engaged, can work miracles – is different from any other kind of love in the world, no matter how noble or beautiful. Christian love has a divine origin, the very love of God shared with humankind, which when grafted onto people, makes them children of God.

This is the requirement for and cause of a unique reality: human fraternity on a higher plane, supernatural brotherhood and sisterhood.

Now with this kind of fraternity, something comes to pass which calls to mind Christmas: Christ becomes present among people. He is Emmanuel, "God with us". In this fraternity, Christians are united in the name of Christ who promised, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (Mt 18:20) This kind of fraternity is one which enables Christ to be present, even where the Church's ministry is impeded. He is spiritually present, of course, but present all the same. This kind of fraternity can bring the presence of Christ among people, into homes, schools and hospitals, into factories and offices, into every community and gathering.

The Second Vatican Council, as well as the Pope, underlines this frequently: the community, as a family united in the name of Christ, rejoices in His presence. This kind of fraternity makes us Church. As Odo Casel wrote: "It is not a case of the one Church (Ecclesia) breaking up into many single communities, nor of the many individual communities uniting together to form the one Ecclesia. No, the Ecclesia, the Church is ONE, wherever it is, it is one, whole and undivided, even where there are only two or three people united in the name of Christ" (O Casel, *Il mistero dell'Ecclesia*, Città Nuova, Roma 1975, p.179)

Perhaps we Christians are not always aware of this extraordinary possibility. This Christmas let's ask God to give us the grace to welcome this gift better, and make it bear more fruit. With this kind of fraternity, no matter where it is or with whom, we won't be alone in thinking and worrying about how to resolve the problems around us. If we want (and it's enough to be united in His name, so with Him and as He wants) Christ will be among us. He'll be with us – He, the All-Powerful One! And this gives us hope. Yes, great hope.

It is definitely the case that wherever we are - in our Christian families, in our groups, in our movements, whatever their aim is under the Christian banner, in the projects we dedicate our time to - we should all revive the unity and fraternity which brings the presence of Christ among us, making us Church. We should openly declare this as our intention, without fear or false modesty.

If Christmas reminds us how much God has loved us, to the point of becoming one of us, we can easily understand how by the logic of His love He would always want to stay involved in our lives and to continue living, in some way, among us, sharing our joys, sufferings, responsibilities and efforts, always ready, as our Brother, to give us a hand. For Him, it's not enough to come to us every time we gather together solemnly for the celebration of the Eucharist. It's not enough for Him to be particularly present in other ways such as in the Church hierarchy or in His Word. He wants to be with us always. For him

two or three Christians are enough, not even two or three saints! It's enough for there to be two or more people of good will who believe in Him and above all in His love.

If we do this, there will be countless living cells within the Church, and with time these will be able to animate the society around them and eventually the masses. In this way, moved by the Spirit of Christ, humanity will be better able to fulfil the design of God on the world, and give a decisive push towards a peaceful but unstoppable social revolution, with consequences we would never even dare to dream of.

If the historical Christ healed and fed people in soul and body, Christ mystically present among us can do the same. If the historical Christ, before dying, asked His Father for the unity of his disciples, Christ mystically present among Christians will know how to bring it about. If today people can unite in the name of Christ, then tomorrow we'll see whole peoples united.

To respond to what God is asking of us through the Pope, it seems clear that the Holy Spirit has already prepared the ground. It's a matter of giving a boost to our Christian life which can be too individualistic, often mediocre and above all not authentic enough.