

(English translation)

To become saints as Church

How easy it is to notice a profound desire beginning to take hold in Christians; I would even call it an urgency. They show a desire to serve the Church not so much and not only in outward, material ways but in a different manner, more in tune with their faith, more essential.

One sees, especially among laity, that the way people used to think about becoming saints is not much appreciated; indeed at times they consider it outdated. The style of sanctity for today's Christian goes beyond that of perfection sought individually, and they often express it like this: we want to become saints together, we desire a collective sanctity.

So here and there we see committed Christians forming groups who, in unity, go toward God.

In fact it seems to us that this is what God really wants, so long as it all has the stamp of openness, the pulse of the entire Church, a loving unity with the hierarchy.

The face of the Church, with its lights and shadows, ought to be in every Christian, in every group of Christians. This means that we must feel as our own not only the Church's joys, her hopes, her constantly new forms of growth, her victories, but above all we must feel as our own all of her sorrows: the lack of full unity among the Churches, negative disputes, the threat of discarding age-old treasures, the anguish that many deny or refuse the message God speaks to the world for its salvation.

In all these afflictions, above all in the spiritual ones, the suffering Church appears as the Crucified Christ of today who cries out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46).

Not long ago I was at Mount La Verna. There I meditated on the exceptional gift of the stigmata that God gave Francis as a seal of his imitation of Christ, of his discipleship.

I was thinking that all true Christians should be stigmatics, not in an extraordinary, outward sense but spiritually.

I seemed to understand that the stigmata of today's Christians are the mysterious but real sufferings of the contemporary Church.

If the charity of Christ is not wide enough in us to feel in ourselves the pain of these wounds, we are not how God wants us to be today.

In these times, only an individual sanctity is not enough, nor one that is communitarian but closed. We must feel within ourselves the sorrow and also joy that Christ experiences today in his Bride.

We need to become saints as Church.

Chiara Lubich, *Essential Writings*, New City Press, New York and New City, London (English translation), 2007, p. 117-118.