Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them.
(Rev 21:3)

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is celebrated in many parts of the world from January 18-25; others celebrate it at Pentecost. Chiara Lubich always commented on the Biblical verse chosen for this occasion in the Word of Life of that same month. This year's phrase for the Week of Prayer is: "You are witnesses of these things"(Lk 24:48). To help us put it into practice, we propose the following text of Chiara as an urgent call for Christians to join together and bear witness to the presence of God in the world.

This month's word of life is a source of earnest encouragement: if we want to be part of God's people, we must allow him to live among us. But how is this possible? What can we do in order to have such a foretaste of the endless joy we will have in seeing God while still on earth?

This is exactly what Jesus revealed to us. This is the very meaning of his coming: to communicate his life of love with the Father, so that we too can live it.

We Christians can live this phrase even now and have God among us. To have him among us, however, requires certain conditions that are affirmed by the Fathers of the Church. For Basil, the essential condition is living according to the will of God; for John Chrysostom, it is loving our neighbor as Jesus did; for Theodore the Studite, it is mutual love; and for Origen, it is having such accord in thought and in feeling that we arrive at a concord that "unites, and contains the Son of God."

The key for allowing God to dwell among us is in the teachings of the Gospel: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (Jn 13:34). Mutual love is the key to the presence of God. "If we love one another, God remains in us" (1 Jn 4:12). "For where two or three are gathered together in my name," Jesus says, "there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20).

 "God himself will always be with them."

In this light then, the fulfillment of all the promises of the Old Covenant —
"My dwelling shall be with them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Ez 37:27) — is not far off and unattainable.

Everything is already accomplished in Jesus because he continues, beyond his historical existence, to be present among those who live according to the new law of mutual love, the norm that makes them a people, the people of God.

This Word of Life is therefore an urgent call, especially for us Christians, to witness through love to the presence of God. "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35). Living out the new commandment sets forth the conditions for the presence of Jesus among all people.

We cannot do anything unless this presence is guaranteed, a presence that gives meaning to the supernatural brotherhood that Jesus brought on earth for all humanity.

"God himself will always be with them."

First of all, it is up to us Christians, even though we belong to different ecclesial communities, to let the world see one people made up of every ethnic group, race and culture, adults and children. One people to whom we can apply the words said of the first Christians, "Look at how they love one another and are ready to give their lives for one another."

This is the miracle humanity is waiting for in order to regain hope. This miracle will also provide an essential contribution to ecumenism, the journey towards full and visible unity among Christians. It is a miracle within our reach, or better, a miracle of the one who dwells among those of us united by love, the one who can change the direction of the world and lead all humanity toward unity.

—Chiara Lubich

The Word of Life, a sentence of Scripture, is offered each month as a guide and inspiration for daily life. Its translation into 90 different languages and dialects reaches several million people worldwide, through print, radio, TV and the internet. From the Focolare Movement's beginnings, Chiara Lubich wrote her commentaries on the Word of Life, and after her death on March 14, 2008, her early writings are now being featured once again. This commentary was originally published in January 1999. If you would like to read experiences of life related to this or to past "Words of Life", they can be found in Living City, the Focolare monthly magazine (livingcitymagazine.com) or in books published by New City Press (newcitypress.com).
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